The #1 Computer Game Magazine

Computer Gaming World

THE NEW LOOK OF COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The #1 Computer Game Magazine

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MARCH 1996
NO.140

Blades & Bullets

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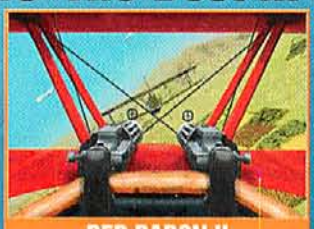
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— Strategy Plus



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— Edge Magazine

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FEATURES



50 Cover Story: 1996 Flight Sims Aim High

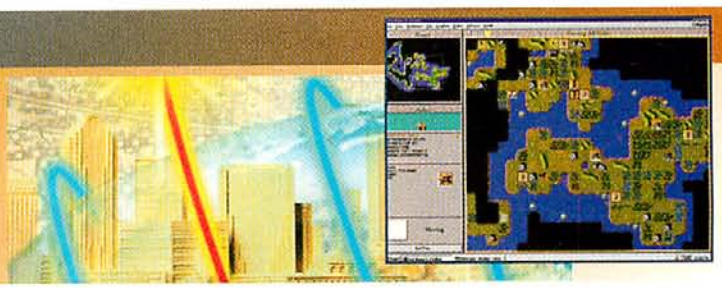
From the earliest biplanes to the latest high-tech modern jets, the newest flight sims are all jockeying for air time. Denny Atkin hops in the virtual CGW stealth fighter to return with classified shots and information for your eyes only.

62 Cover Story: Mil Mi-24 Hind

The AH-64 Apache may epitomize agility and electronics, but its Soviet counterpart uses brute force. Take this test flight with Interactive Magic's new missile-heavy helicopter sim and see how they fly behind what's left of the Iron Curtain.

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Sid Meier's classic CIVILIZATION goes multiplayer, and the CGW editors vie for world domination—only for research purposes, you understand.



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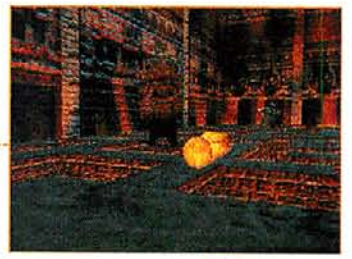
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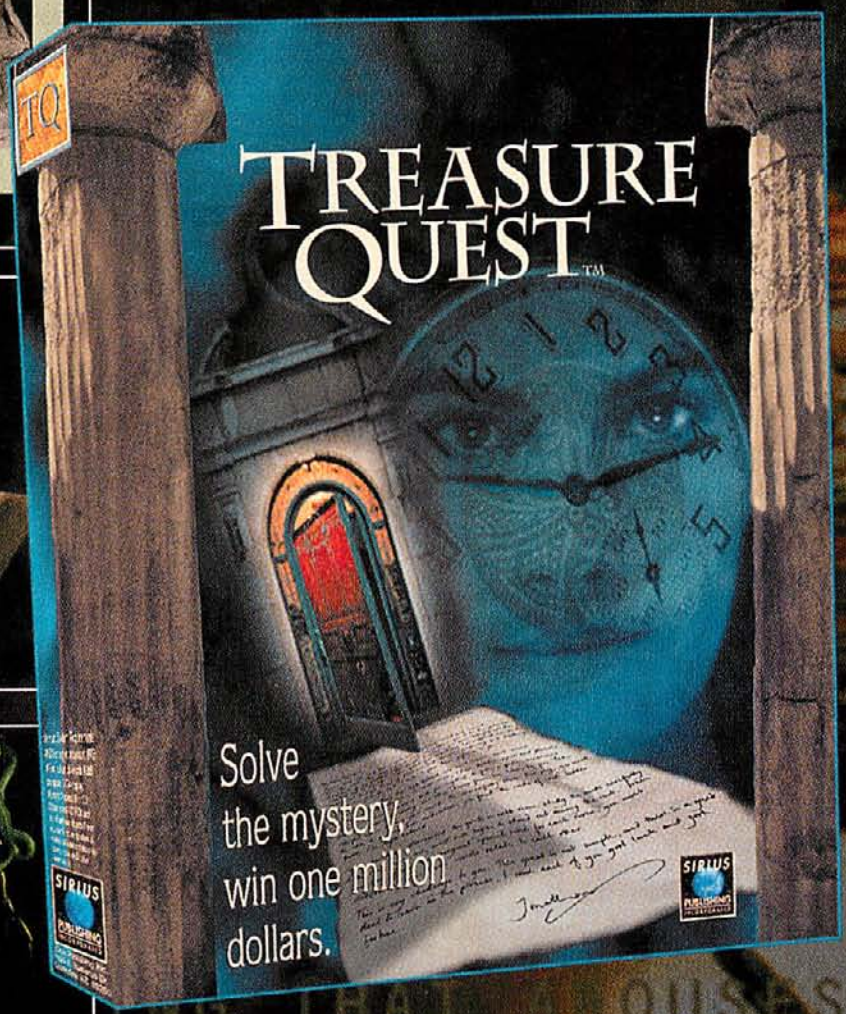
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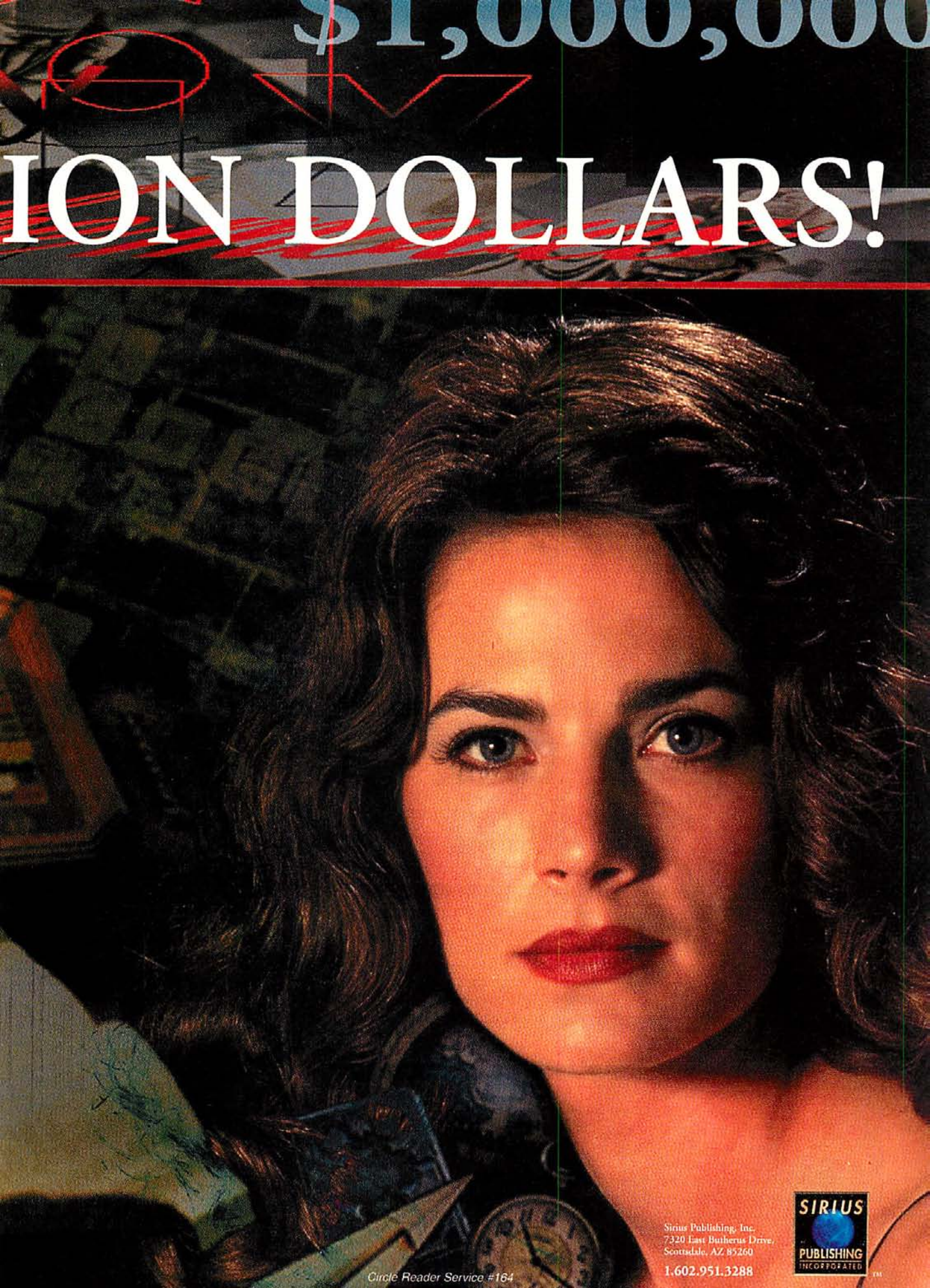
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CREDITS



Denny Atkin, *CG*'s Features Editor and resident simulations fan(atic), is a veteran computer gamer and former editorial staffer at *Compute!* and *OMNI*. His passion for flight sims paid off in October, 1994, when the Air Force took him for a ride in an F-15D. After pulling a cool 7.8Gs and even manning the Eagle's controls, Denny returned to Earth where he continues to walk on clouds and keep his experience quiet to avoid "I hate you" comments from fellow sim fans. When asked what he'd like to do next, he answers with a maniacal grin, "after that, anything else is *gravy*." He would like to go to space someday, though some might claim he's already there.



Jeff James, *CGW* action games columnist, is a long-time contributor to the magazine. His affinity for action games, such as DUKE NUKEM 3D and EARTHWORM JIM, is matched by his admiration for strategy and wargaming classics like X-COM and PANZER GENERAL. This schizophrenic combination of game preferences results in Jeff (and his aging-Generation X reflexes) being regularly taunted by steely-eyed eight-year-olds during bouts of MORTAL KOMBAT 3 at the local arcade.



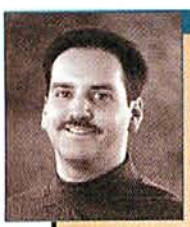
Martin Cirulis, "a grumpy old gamer" by his own admission, hails from Vancouver, Canada. Since discovering computer gaming on a TRS-80, he has retired four generations of computer systems. At one time he was indoctrinated in the black art of programming, but turned his back on it in the name of Science Fiction literature, which he continues to write when he isn't knee-deep in game reviews. His game design motto: "If there ain't no dice, there ain't no game."



Arinn Dembo was born in 1970, after attending Woodstock during the second trimester of her mother's pregnancy (draw your own conclusion). She was first thrown out of a courtroom at the tender age of four weeks, when the judge felt she asserted an undue influence on the jury. As a result of a youth spent in pool halls, pinball alleys and video arcades, she is qualified to review games, smoke cigars and exercise all the other privileges of a tattooed lady.



Christopher Breen has played Mac games so long that he's developed the ability to convert monitor emissions into fructose, which lengthens his playing time while cutting down on food costs. Co-author of the *Macintosh Bible Guide to Games* from Peachpit Press and contributing editor to *MacUser* magazine, Breen believes that following the Tao of Apple will lead to his appointment as Secretary of the Interior someday. In the meantime he is still able to communicate with PC users.



Eddie Malstrom's effect on *CGW* has been singularly monumental. As Art Director (or Alcohol Director, depending on the circumstances), Eddie is the chief architect of the magazine's redesign, the *CGW* Web site and the cover CD-ROM. Before joining the staff last year, Eddie designed *CD-ROM Today*, *PC Gamer* and *The Net* magazines. Although he spends most of his time with Quark, Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, he also enjoys playing action and golf games on the computer, and when he tires of all the electron beams, he plays with his baby daughter, Rachel.

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CG 140 MARCH 1996

PUBLISHER
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Managing Editor	Ken Brown
Features Editor	Denny Atkin
Reviews Editor	Terry Coleman
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Founder	Russell Sipe

DESIGN

Art Director	Edwin C. Malstrom
Graphic Artist	Jack Rodrigues

PRODUCTION

Production Manager	Steve Spingola
Production Coordinator	Kim Smith

HOW TO CONTACT THE EDITORS

Address questions and feedback to CG Editorial, 135 Main St., 14th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105. Or you may contact us via:

Phone: (415) 357-4900
Editorial Fax: (415) 357-4977
CompuServe: (76703,622)
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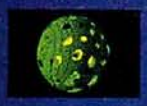
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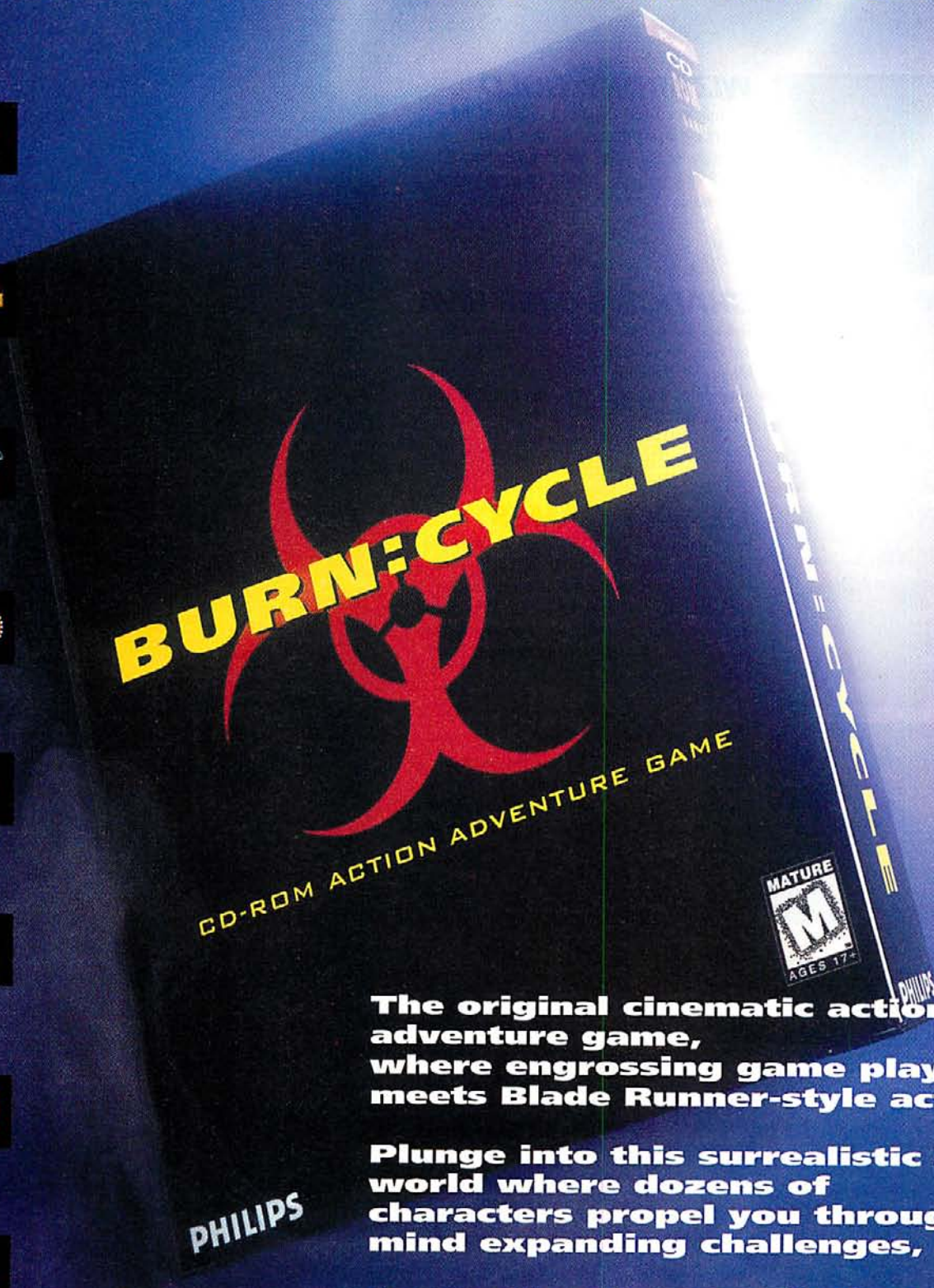












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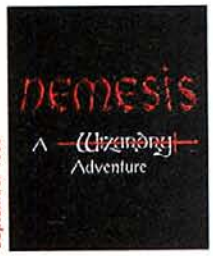
The sequel to the 1994 Role-Playing Game of the Year. Featured on the cover of PC Gamer Magazine, *Shadows Over Riva* will be the most anticipated adventure / RPG game of 1996 and an instant hit!



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These are answers to some of the most-frequently asked questions from our readers. We offer this as a service so that you won't keep sending us nasty email asking how to get the CD-ROM. But we won't hold our breath, either...

What's On The CD-ROM?

A typical demo disk displays a series of mundane point-and-click, wait-and-watch exercises. Our CD-ROM has things to *Do and Use*. You can try out games, play scenarios, update patches to fix games you already own, and print out original 256-color comics in full-size artist's panels. This is the definition of *INTERACTIVE*.

This Month's Hot Picks and Features...

This month, we've coordinated the contents of the CD with the magazine. Once you've read the flight-sim round-up feature and gathered some useful tips, you can download the Su-27 Flanker scenario and watch how our expert flies the mission. (Remember, you'll need a commercial copy of Su-27 in order to use the scenario and view the mission.) If you don't have Su-27, you can still practice take-offs and landings in FormGen's entry-level flight sim, Black Knight. After your warm-up, you can log on to America Online and play Warbirds in real-time head-to-head combat with other air warriors—all from the "*CG*"-ROM.



Also on the CG-ROM, you'll find *interactive* demos of SSI's Age of Rifles, Front Page Sports Football 96 by Sierra On-Line, and Maxis' FullTilt! Pinball. As usual, we've also included product demos—some interactive, some merely teasers—from our advertisers.

How Do I Use It?

Our CD is Windows 3.1 and Windows 95 compatible. If you have Windows 95, installation is a breeze—our CD is Autoplay enabled. Just "lock 'n' load" and it will start automatically. Otherwise, boot your computer in Windows 3.1, pop the CD into your drive, select RUN from the Program Manager's menu and type D:\RUNME (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) to run it straight from the CD. To create a *Computer Gaming World* program group on your Windows desktop, type D:\INSTALL. If you've installed one of our CDs in the past, the new installation will use the previous icon group. After installation, navigate by pointing and clicking just as you would in any other Windows program.



How Do I Get The Su-27 Scenario?

To copy the Su-27 Flanker scenario, click on its icon in the *CGW Extra* main screen and follow the instructions. Remember, you must have a copy of the game in order to employ the scenario.

How Do I Get The Demo Files?

To access the featured demos, click on EDITORS' HOT DEMO PICKS, then click on the title you want to see and follow the instructions. To get product demos, click on PRODUCT DEMOS and go to either Action/Adventure to view Treasure Quest, 11th Hour: The Sequel, FullTilt! Pinball, and Cyberia 2; Strategy/Simulation to preview SimIsle, SpaceBucks, Jet Fighter III, and Star Ranger; or Classics/Sports to see Hoyle Classic Games, HardBall 5, and NCAA Championship Basketball.

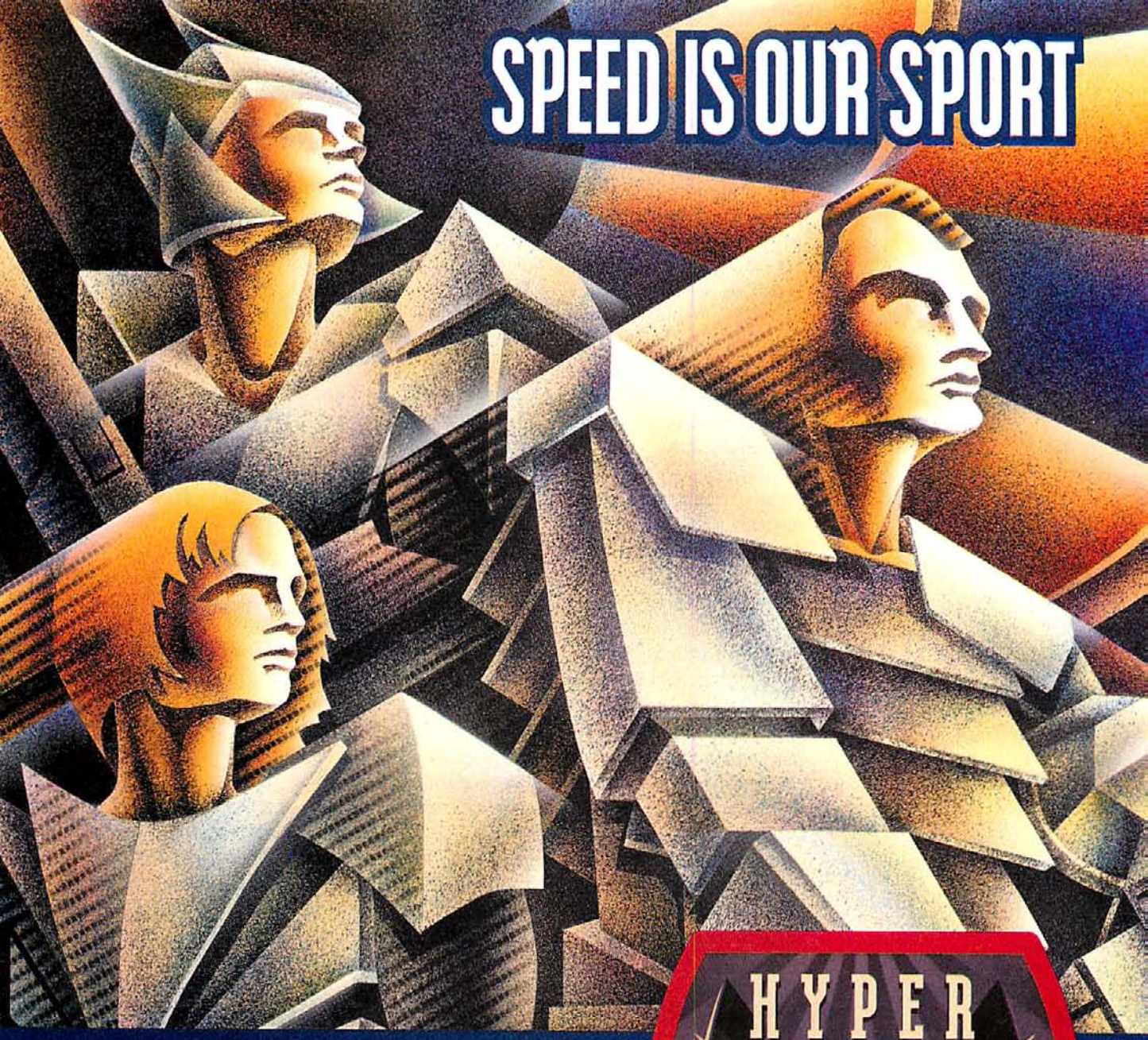
How Do I Get The Patch Files?

Click on PATCHES from the MAIN MENU, then read the text window for instructions on copying the files to your hard drive. Follow the instructions for any files on the CD and you're set.

How Do I Get The CD-ROM?

Newsstand issues now come in two flavors: with or without the CD. Both versions are clearly marked—if you can't find the version you want in the store you frequent, encourage your retailer to carry it (or subscribe to ensure you receive your copy every month). To subscribe, call 800-827-4450 (or 212-503-5008), and specify that you want the CD-ROM version. To order back issues, call 303-666-7000.

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How Do We Classify Games?

Action/Arcade (AC): The emphasis is on hand-eye coordination and reflexes, usually emphasizing fast play over story or strategy.

Adventure (AD): Games wherein you control an alter ego and move through a storyline or sequence of events, where puzzle-solving takes precedence over conversation and combat.

Classics/Puzzles (CP): Classics are old stand-bys and parlor games that appeal to many different types of gamer. Examples include: BACKGAMMON, bridge, chess, MONOPOLY, parchesi, RISK, and SOLITAIRE. Puzzle games are computer games which emphasize spatial relationships, word games and/or problem-solving without requiring gamers to follow a storyline. Examples would be: Shanghai, TETRIS and ZIG-ZAG.

Role-Playing (RP): RPGs are a subset of adventure games, but stress character development, often through improving stats or other attributes. Conversations with non-player characters (NPCs) and tactical combat are generally more important than in Adventure games. Finally, the game world tends to be large, and the plot less linear, often with some quests/treks outside the main storyline.

Simulations (SI): Highly realistic games from a first-person perspective: you may drive a realistically simulated race car, fly a military aircraft with a meticulous physics model, or swoop through a detailed sci-fi environment. Usually polygon-filled technology is used to build the simulated world on the fly.

Sports (SP): The sports game category is a broad genre which includes action (NBA Live) and strategy games (FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO) based on sports.

Strategy (ST): Problem-solving, short- and long-range planning are the keys here. These games almost always emphasize resource and risk management. This genre includes conflict-based sci-fi and fantasy games (X-COM, OUTPOST, MOO), as well as "pure" strategy games and "software toys" such as SIMCITY.

Wargames (WG): A subset of strategy games, these recreate historical conflicts from a command perspective. They may be tactical, operational, or strategic, and stress anything from logistics and firepower to morale and leadership. They may be simple (PANZER GENERAL, EMPIRE II) to incredibly detailed and complex (PACIFIC WAR).

What Is Your Reviews Policy?

1) We only review from the final copy of the game. Though it has become popular among PC gaming magazines to review from late beta copies, we feel that the reader is best served by having the reviewer look at the same copy of a game that the readers will find on the shelves. While we recognize that this causes some delay in coverage, we believe the reader is better served by such caution.

2) We expect our reviewers to finish the game. We want our readers to be assured that we do not review based on immediate or early impressions of a game. Our reviewers give a game ample opportunity to show its quality. In some cases, bugs make it impossible to finish a game, but we identify situations where that has occurred.

3) We make every effort to match the reviewer to the game. We take into consideration the preferences, background and possible biases of the reviewer and, where possible, we find people with actual life experience or special backgrounds that match a game. We believe this policy enhances both the credibility of the review and the enjoyment of gameplay when the real world and the game world are competently compared.

4) We do not accept free travel from software or hardware companies. We believe such gifts have a tacit assumption of coverage attached to them. We will only cover such events/launches as we believe will benefit our readers.

HOW DO WE RATE?



Outstanding: The rare game that gets it all right. The graphics, sound, and gameplay come together to form a Transcendent Gaming Experience. Our strongest buying recommendation.



Very Good: A high-quality game that succeeds in many areas. May have minor problems, but is still worth your time and money, especially if you're interested in the subject matter or genre.



Average: A mixed bag. Can be a game that reaches for the stars, but falls short in significant areas. Can also be a game that does what it does well, but lacks flair or originality.

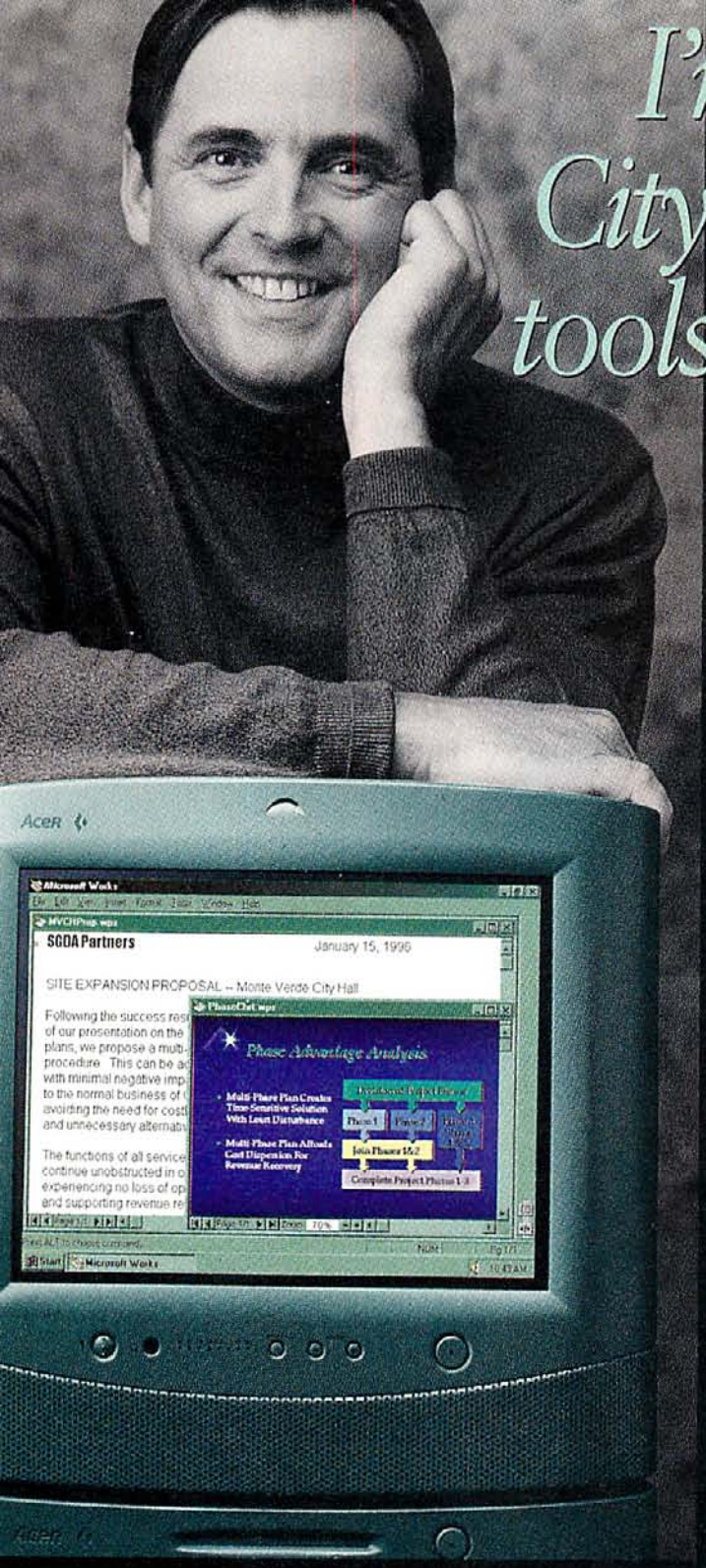


Weak: A game with serious problems. Usually buggy, seriously lacking in play value, or just a poorly-conceived game design—and you will want to think long and hard before buying it.



Abysmal: The rare game that gets it all wrong. This is reserved for those products so buggy, incomplete or valueless that you wonder why they were ever released.

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— Electronic Entertainment

"The best death scenes ever seen in a game!"
— PC Entertainment

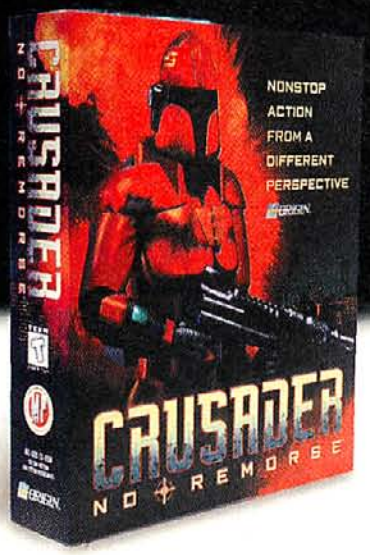
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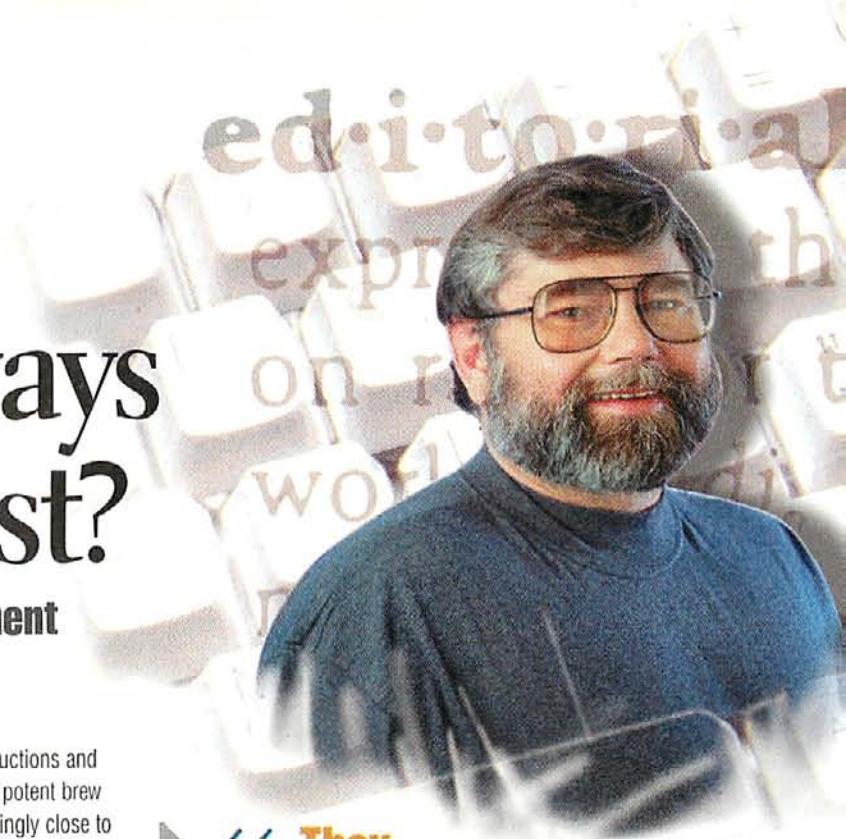
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JOHNNY WILSON

Do Nice Guys Always Finish Last?

The Health of the Entertainment Software Industry



As one of the "old guys" in the computer game business, I'm often asked my perspective on the health of specific companies, the heartbeat of the industry, and my predictions for the future. I figure that's not bad for someone who predicted MYST was a pretty little toy that would do slightly better than break-even, and though I loved the original SIMCITY, felt that the total market for the game had to be less than 10,000 rabid strategy gamers like myself.

Of course, they're probably thinking of the number of times I got it right. Modesty would preclude a recitation of my "bullseye" list and honesty would merely allow that I sit in a privileged position. Anyone who listens and observes from my seat can look smarter than they are. People tell me facts and rumors. Then, my conspiracy buff mind assembles those truths and half-truths into an amazing web of industry intrigue. I bounce the wild stuff off my colleagues and they ask me questions so that I have to defend my assertions. This surgically removes the most improbable material from my deductions and enables us to distill a potent brew that is usually surprisingly close to the truth.

For example, it didn't take too much evidence to deduce that 1995 was going to be a tough year for Acclaim Entertainment. The console game market was already going soft and the company had just lost its exclusive relationship with Williams, the coin-op company who brought us the original MORTAL KOMBAT and NBA JAM. Add to that the fact that this company had made its bones on side-scrolling, fighting games and platform games on the console machines while the market was turning to the personal computer platform to fill in revenue gaps until a next-generation machine became dominant. The future didn't look bright, even though many financial analysts were still looking at the glory days of MK and saying Acclaim was unstoppable. It shouldn't be any surprise that Acclaim experienced the price drop over 1995 that is described in this month's READ.ME section. Indeed, it surprises us that it didn't drop more.

It also didn't take too much evidence to figure Spectrum HoloByte was going to have a tough year. The venture capitalists who had helped Spectrum remove itself from a messy entanglement with the late Robert Maxwell's house of cards managed to fill the software maker's management with a lot of executives who didn't/don't understand software development. They thought the software industry was the same as the toy industry, forgetting the most vital market statistic imaginable—computer gamers are adults, while toys are largely targeted toward a younger market (Nerf weapons and a few other exceptions to the contrary). This inevitably resulted in two costly and fairly predictable results: 1) defecting or decimated design teams which led to 2) delayed and poorly received products (need we spell out ACROSS THE RHINE, FALCON 4, MAGIC: THE GATHERING, and TOP GUN?). Their ST:TNG product has done well, but not enough to stem the tide of quarterly losses. No wonder you'll see the losses reported in READ.ME.

> "They thought the software industry was the same as the toy industry, forgetting the most vital market statistic—computer gamers are adults."

Then, there was Atari—the one-time reigning monarch of the video game market. Without enough Jaguar developers, Atari's hope for a next-generation machine has not really captured the market. Without that market dominance, the company finds itself falling back on old stand-bys. They have brought back former Tengen (Atari Games) executive Ted Hoff from Fox Interactive to

DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP!

The world's great Men-of-War sail again ... and you're in command!

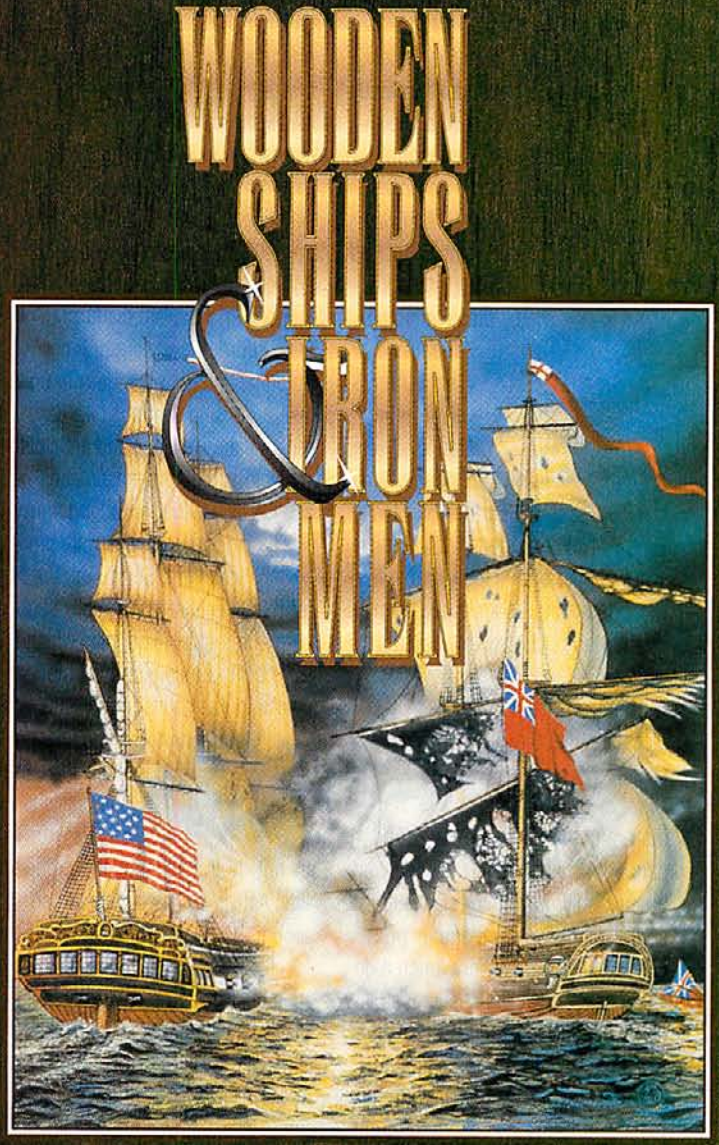
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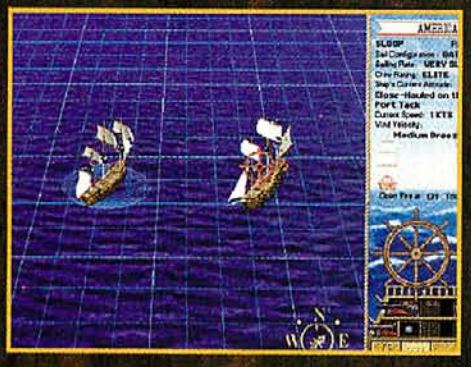
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create Atari Interactive, a division they hope to build on the back of their classic coin-op and console games. We know there is incremental revenue to be gleaned from these old shovelware packages, but we don't know if there is enough to fund a new division. (Apparently, this assertion was correct, since Hoff had left Atari Interactive by press time and the future of both the division and Atari itself was in doubt.) It's really too bad for Atari that their strategic partner/investor, Time Warner, hasn't started to shift some of their assets to the cable television business. That's a new market where Atari could feasibly have an edge.

The other major disappointment in stock price was Creative Technology, makers of the SoundBlaster sound card. This company has experienced phenomenal growth correlative to the sound card revolution, and its product line has become very much a *de facto* standard. Yet, it was almost inevitable that the sound card market would flatten due to the company's previous success in penetrating the market, and that it would go through a period where research and development expenditures would outstrip profit expectations. The company has weathered such a period, and now Creative hopes to duplicate in the 3-D graphic accelerator card market what it accomplished in the sound card market. If so, it could reverse this performance in the next year.

On the up side, no one would have thought it bold to suggest that Broderbund would continue to ride its careful and focused product strategy into a near 30 percent gain in stock price or that Electronic Arts, the market leader in sports games on most platforms and parent of two of the hottest subsidiaries in game publishing (Origin and Bullfrog), would continue its aggressive growth pattern. EA's willingness to shift from platform to platform in order to maximize profit potential and its willingness to undertake promising ventures (like its recent Janes alliance and anticipated multiplayer web projects) means we'll see EA as a player for a long time.

The biggest surprises were probably Activision and Sierra. Yet, the latter has benefited from: finally shipping some of its main titles which were using up development money; divesting itself of its unprofitable INN game network; and acquiring publishers like Impressions and Papyrus to fill out "holes" in the Sierra product line. Activision has largely turned around because of one big hit, MECHWARRIOR 2. Just shipping this megahit transformed investors into believers who could suddenly see SPYCRAFT, ZORK NEMESIS and MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND landing Activision into a welcome sea of black ink filled with dollar "sine" waves.

Add to this picture the new emphasis on quality at Mindscape/SSI (now part of foreign-owned Pearson Plc) and the hypergrowth at Interplay Productions (with its MCA backing). Suddenly, the future looks pretty bright for the computer game business. Note that the Hollywood companies haven't come to dominate the market (or even be very forceful players) and that 1995 was pretty good, indeed, to most of the companies in our business that have been here for 10 years or more. Sometimes, the good guys *do* win. Personally, I'd like to see revenue outperform stock price in 1996.

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

HEROIC OBSERVATIONS

As a subscriber for years (and years), please keep up the good work. Your refusal to sugar coat game reviews continues to make the statement that you are an editorial publication and not merely an outlet for advertisers.

I wanted to make two unrelated comments. The first is a caveat to prospective purchasers of Creative Labs AWE 32. It is not "backwards" compatible to earlier Sound Blaster games/cards. I have been extremely disappointed at how many of my recent purchases lock up or produce no sound on my new computer. When I called Creative Labs for help, they told me my system was too fast! I loaned the same games to a friend who, at my suggestion, purchased the SB Pro with his Pentium 133 instead of the SB AWE32 card and the games work fine. Creative Labs is earning a reputation for letting its users work out their own problems.

The second is on Jason Kapalka's review of HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC. (This game loaded and ran immediately. Thank you, New World, for writing the AWE 32 into your compatibility list.) The graphics are outstanding and the animation clever and subtle—facial expressions change appropriately during combat.) Jason is right on with his evaluation that the game has reduced replayability and slight shortness in the manual's information. A number of important game aspects must be discovered by the player. His five-star rating was a bit high, but that's what makes the world a different place.

With about 150 hours of playtime on HEROES, I would like to expand on a few aspects. The slow Trolls he mentioned are actually missile units and would never lose to archers one on one. Dwarves or Ogres would have been a better example than Trolls. Also, castles don't always start with two troop types; sometimes more, sometimes less. Leaders can sometimes be ransomed in battle, so there is a possibility for "quarter."

Gamewise, there are a few small glitches—such as gamemaps with inaccessible resources and one especially frustrating area that permits your group to sneak past the ghosts on the way into a cul-de-sac, but not on the way out. Until one learns to closely scrutinize areas, resources can be obscured by map features. In combat, the icon showing which spell your troop has been hit with can be covered by a nearby companion. However, my biggest complaint with the game is the computer cheats which have rendered most scenarios unwinnable (read unplayable). As a calibrator, I completed two PANZER GENERAL campaigns with all Major victories except for a Minor victory in the American invasion. So, there's my perspective when I say that HEROES' AI is good. However, no amount of human tactical skill can overcome the suspiciously rapid development of the computer and its ability to crank out high-level troops from new castles. Jason is probably right on with his suggestion that the computer starts with more resources than its opponent—thus giving it the ability to grow quickly. Further, the computer never attempts to pick up an artifact protected by assassins and has an uncanny ability to proceed directly to your strongholds. Other questionable activity has occurred. Consequently, except for the tutorial scenario, only scenarios classified as LARGE offer any reasonable chance of winning.



The campaign feature is an excellent plus. Unfortunately, I am making my last attempt to complete a full campaign this weekend. The last campaign scenario, thus far, has been impossible due to the computer's ability to develop so quickly.

New World has an excellent value game which could be improved with a "Daddy, can I play too?" selection, a random map generator, and (as could any game) improved AI—especially from the strategic standpoint.

R. Jesser
Marietta, GA

Hmm, 150+ hours and it's not a five-star game? Wow! Makes one wonder how many hours you would spend on a "real" five-star game! Still, we have some good news for you. New World is so pleased at how HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC has been received that they are working on an expanded version. In addition to the random map generator, an upcoming sequel will feature a construction kit for making your own maps and campaigns.

BILLIONTHS AND BILLIONTHS OF SECONDS

I'd like to make an erratum to the article "Mother, What a Board!" (December, 1995). On p. 393, col. 3, 1st paragraph, he mentioned "8 nanosecond..." and spelled out "eight millionths of a second..." It should read "billionths of a second" because nano is a prefix for 10^9, or a billionth times a specified time. Thus, in a nanosecond circuitry, a circuit processes pulses or waveforms with rise and fall measured in billionths of a second or less.

Gene M. Irasusta
Hayward CA

PROTECTION RACKET

One of the aspects of CGW that I like the most is its honest ratings of games. (Some of the other magazines seem not to want to offend anyone and talk about each new game like it is the "greatest.") I do have, however, a problem with your game reviews when you say "Protection: None (CD must be in drive)". To me, this is a contradiction in terms. If the program checks for a specific CD in the drive, then it uses a Key Disk protection. This is the same protection as many 1980s games used and that consumers found so annoying.



Kenneth Ballard
Moraga, Ca.

As we've noted before, sometimes this is key disk protection and sometimes, it is not. Sometimes, as in the case of GABRIEL KNIGHT 2: THE BEAST WITHIN, the CD must be in the drive because the movie segments

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are played off the CD. At other times, the CD must be in the drive because the program looks for the CD as verification. We understand that the latter is a serious inconvenience when you've gone to all the trouble of copying an entire CD to your hard drive. Yet, we think we are providing the information you need to avoid such egregious copy protection when we tell you whether it needs the CD to work or not. As we've stated before, it's not a good use of our time to study the directory structure and use all of the multiple installation procedures in a program to determine whether this is copy protection or merely a utilitarian conservation of hard disk space. We merely observe whether it requires the CD in the drive or it doesn't.

MULTIPLAYER/ MULTICOPIES

If you review a game that has multiplayer capability, would you please let us know if a separate copy of the game must be bought for each player to play? COMMAND AND CONQUER, WARCRAFT, and WARCRAFT 2 was not a problem, as they allowed you to play multiplayer with only one person buying the game. My roommate and I have our computers hooked up null modem, and really like playing multiplayer games, but do not like buying two copies of the same game!

Also, I was thinking of buying a sports game, and cannot decide on whether to get JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL 96, or NHL 96. I like football and ice hockey equally well. I just want the better sim.

Blake Ringholz
Pensacola, FL 32514

We sure would and already do. If you look in the Basic Information provided with each review, you'll see a topic called, "Protection." If the product requires you to have multiple copies, as opposed to using the "spawning" technology of WARCRAFT, it will say (as does the information provided with our CIVNET review) "one CD required per player". As for which sports game to buy, most of us would opt for NHL '96. It is clearly the winner in the hockey category, while some football fans would argue that FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL: PRO is still the game of choice.

YOU REALLY LOVE US!

I just wanted to take the time and tell you what an excellent gaming magazine you have! I just recently started a subscription and wanted to let you know I am thoroughly pleased. In the past I have read other computer gaming magazines and none of them come close to the professionalism and the outstanding information your magazine holds. Keep up the good work and thank you for giving me more than my money's worth.

James Cassity
Wilmington DE.

NO VGA VAPORWARE

I have just finished reading the article "The Fire Between The Stars" in your Jan. '96 issue. I have to admit I found the article, over all, pretty good with a notable exception. There were several references to VGA Planets 4.0 and "hinting" that it is vaporware and was expected to be out in 1995. If the author had taken the time to check in on Tim Wisseman's BBS, the alt.games.vga-planets usenet group and/or the AOL forum area, he would have realized VGAP in 1995 was dedicated to the development of WINPLAN (planets 3.5). A new windows-driven interface, this is a prelude to 4.0. It was also a year that saw the development and release of the NEW 3.2 HOST program for planets that greatly expanded the platform of VGAP.

The expansion has allowed "hooks" in the host program that allow outside programmers to create expansion modules that run within the host, so that people can create new and exciting features to this beloved game (it has been in your top 50 forever). With the release of the new HOST and WINPLAN came the release of some add-on software by Dan & Dave (I am Dave). We added five new modules to VGAP that have proven very popular and have extended the playability and life of VGAP a great deal.Working with Tim, I also created a complete user manual. A huge 129-page manual for the game. And a quarterly newsletter dedicated to the VGAP Players. All of which have been well recieved and have enhanced the game itself and the amount of enjoyment that can be gained from it.

As a contributor to VGA PLANETS 4.0, I can tell you it is well into development now that WINPLAN was put to bed. I have already designed over 15 NEW races to be used in the new 4.0 system. 4.0 is not vaporware. Code is being written and I have written requirement documents for it myself.

Dave Killingsworth
Durham, CA

Frankly, we have always been supporters of VGA PLANETS. Not only did we commit two strategy articles to it in addition to the review, but those "out of print" articles are now back in print on our web page and on our electronic edition on AT&T's Interchange edition of Computer Gaming World. Unfortunately, not only did we not receive a copy of WINPLAN prior to the article, we still haven't received one. If we had received a copy of WINPLAN, we would have reviewed it. It is something our readers would have wanted to know about. We print your letter to provide information and regret the confusion.

The Credit Department

Thanks to Pascal Ode, Meylan, France, for last month's tip on STEEL PANTHERS (Allen Emrich, page 208). If you'd like to swap SP tips with Ode, you can contact him by e-mail at 100257.1375@compuserve.com or visit his Web site at http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/POde.

We welcome your gameplay tips, and will credit you with them in the CG Tips section of each column. Please mark your tips "CG Tips" and direct them to one of the addresses below.

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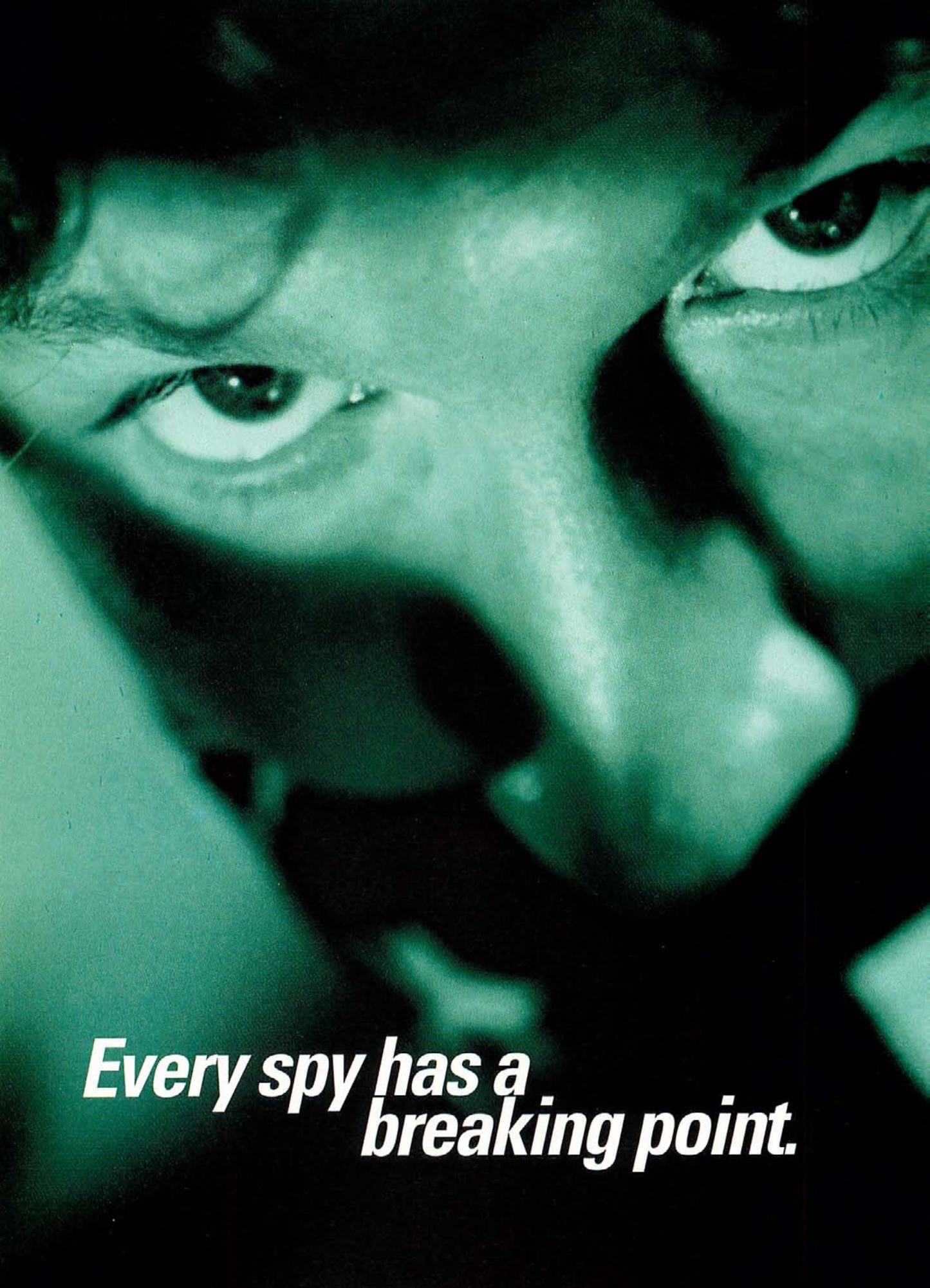
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Consumer Electronics Show Offerings Emphasize "4X" Gaming

Gamers who revel in the traditional four "eX"es of gaming should love the upcoming crop of strategy games covering the gamut from the ancients to space conquest. No fewer than five companies stepped up to the plate in the classic 4X category at this year's Consumer Electronics Show.



DEADLOCK looks like a solid multi-player gamefest, with elements of SIMCITY, UTOPIA, and METAL LORDS.

Sierra, using the design team from CAESAR II, is developing THE RISE AND RULE OF ANCIENT EMPIRES. In addition to great graphics, it will have a robust diplomatic elements, cultural distinctives for each civilization, and a fast play rate—games are expected to average around two hours. THE RISE AND RULE OF ANCIENT EMPIRES is expected to challenge SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION II from MicroProse (due out later this year and featuring new technologies, city improvements, Wonders of the World, and military units) and Avalon Hill's just-released ADVANCED CIVILIZATION for control of the "ancients" segment to 4X gaming. (For the review on ADVANCED CIVILIZATION, see issue #139, pg. 210).

Interplay's contender in this category doesn't go back so far in time. CONQUESTS OF THE NEW WORLD (CNW) will allow gamers to explore random worlds; build 3-D colonies; exploit local economies; and exterminate rival empires in solitaire or multi-player mode.



MOB RULE New World's CHAOS OVERLORDS lets gamers become the godfathers and good guys of a dark future.

If you take exploitation too far, colonies may revolt against you and become new opponents. See our preview in issue #135, pg. 96.

New World Computing takes a different approach to the 4X concept with a game about gang warfare in a dark near future. CHAOS OVERLORDS is a multi-player game that allows you to build up a gang, bribe cops, run contraband and wipe out your enemies with impunity. (For more information, see last month's *Hands On*, pg. 45.)

ON THE SHELF

Here's a quick look at the hottest products on store shelves, as well as the ones which may not survive through the winter chill.

COMMODORE 64 15 PACK

CG WARP

Take a trip back to the beginning of the computer game heyday with Activision's COMMODORE 64 15 PACK. If you have goose-bump memories of the words "LOGON PLEASE:" on a HACKER's blue screen, or if you fondly recall achieving that car-dodging zen state in GREAT AMERICA CROSS COUNTRY ROAD RACE, this 15 game-ography for Windows 95 should be right up your alley. The 15 PACK also includes ALCAZAR, TOP FUEL ELIMINATOR, DECATHLON and ZONE RANGER. Activision's C-64 emulator is spot on, making the walk down memory lane surprisingly enjoyable. Unlike the Atari Action Packs, some of these games (like HACKER) age well. *—G. Jones*



Activision (800) 477-3650; ***Win 95 CD***
Reader Service 301

TOTAL DISTORTION

CG WARP

TOTAL DISTORTION's challenging gameplay requires "total immersion" to stay afloat. One part 1st-person adventure game

In the space-conquest arena, Blizzard's PAX IMPERIA II will allow up to 16 players to compete via IPX or over the Internet using KALI. PAX IMPERIA II is a real-time space combat game that lets you delegate orders to artificial admirals when you can't oversee everything. It is expected to compete with MicroProse's MASTER OF ORION II (previewed in issue #138, pg. 298).

Accolade's DEADLOCK posits a planet where multiple races (read players) are engaged in a very high-stakes game. Having previously annihilated a habitable planet in their zeal to develop it, the races agree to accord the current planet to the culture which develops it most efficiently. With military exploits, economic manipulation, double-dealing and fast-moving tactical decisions, gamers will strive to make sure that their race wins the right to colonize the entire planet.—*Johnny L. Wilson*

Top 10 Downloads From HAPPY PUPPY GAMES

These are the 10 most downloaded game-related files from the HappyPuppy Web site (HappyPuppy .com). This includes demo versions of games and shareware. Results reflect the first three weeks in January, 1996 and are PC versions only.

Title	Description	Publisher
1. Beavis & Butthead's Hock-a-Loogie (Win 95)	Arcade/Action	Viacom
2. Descent 2	Free-Flight Shooter	Interplay
3. Mortal Kombat 3	Side-View Martial Arts	GT Interactive
4. Dogz Shareware	Cyberpet Toy	Virgin
5. Thor's Hammer	3-D Graphical Adventure	MVP
6. Need for Speed	Arcade Racing	EA
7. Hexen	3-D Corridor Shooter	id Software
8. Apache	Battle Helicopter Simulation	I-Magic
9. Ice and Fire	Win 95 Action/Adventure	Zombie
10. Indy Car Racing 2	Auto Racing Simulation	Papyrus

PLAYING LATELY?

This month, Warcraft II takes over as most-played game, while the original X-COM returns for its *17th month* on the chart. Be sure to send in your feedback card, so we know what games *you* are losing the most sleep over.

READERS' TOP 10

		Last Month	Months On Chart
1.	**Warcraft II** (Blizzard)	1	1
2.	**Steel Panthers** (SSI)	1	3
3.	**Mechwarrior 2** (Activision)	4	5
4.	**Command & Conquer** (Westwood)	2	4
5.	**Crusader: No Remorse** (Origin)	3	2
6.	**Heroes of Might and Magic** (New World Computing)	6	3
7.	**Stonekeep** (Interplay)	5	2
8.	**Panzer General** (SSI)	8	14
9.	**Anvil of Dawn** (New World)	—	1
10.	**X-Com: UFO Defense** (MicroProse)	—	17



and two parts marketing-strategy sim, DISTORTION will evoke memories of the days when tastes were simple and "big-hair" metal ruled MTV. As an aspiring video producer, you spend your inheiritance on a device that enables travel through the dimensions of pop culture. This risky investment leaves you stranded and nearly broke in the "Distortion Dimension," where you must glean interesting footage to incorporate into marketable videos. To survive, you'll need to cultivate diligent market research, employ deft shmoozing skills, and thoroughly manage all your resources. —*K. Hunter*

Pop Rocket, (415) 731-9112; ***IBM CD-ROM***
Reader Service # 302

EIGER LABS, HEADON DSVD

Tired of playing computer opponents? Want to simultaneously thrash and taunt your human opponent without twisting your neck to hold the phone? Eiger Labs has just the ticket, a dual speech and data modem designed for gamers called the HEADON DSVD. Eiger says the HEADON is compatible with several dozen game titles, including DOOM II, HERETIC, DESCENT, and ONE MUST FALL, to name a few.



In DSVD mode, the modem runs at 14.4 Kbps, splitting bandwidth approximately in half for voice and data. The HEADON ships with a hands-free headset, leaving you free to hurl insults while wreaking havoc. We're going to dig into this one, and will let you know next issue what we find. —*D. Salvatore*

Eiger Labs, Inc. (408) 774-3456; ***IBM PC***
Reader Service # 303

EASTERN MIND: THE LOST SOULS OF TONG NOU

EASTERN MIND is an unsettling and convoluted descent into the mind of artist Osamu Sato. Sato created the island of Tong Nou by combining dark recesses of his own personality with tenets of eastern philosophy, rendering it all as the contents of his disembodied head. You must retrieve your soul from Tong Nou by dying nine times and being reincarnat-

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NASCAR Racing



Interplay's Descent™: Destination Saturn



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Circle Reader Service #79

CG ON-LINE

Taking Stock Of 1995

The Winners And Losers Of Interactive Entertainment

With the rapid growth in interactive entertainment, many investors might think that "there's gold in them games." The truth is, computer game companies are just as likely to post big losses as big earnings, as we discovered from their 1995 financial reports.

It is true that computer software is one of the fastest growing segments of the stock market, and it continues to outperform the market overall. In 1994, the Standard & Poors' 500 index declined 1.5 percent, while the Computer Software & Services Index rose 17.9 percent. Similarly, through October of 1995, the software market saw a 48 percent increase compared to the S&P index which gained only 27 percent. According to PC Data of Reston, VA, computer games account for nearly 22 percent of the total revenue in this market.

With the help of Davis Skaggs Investment Management (San Francisco, CA), we found that nearly all of the major game producers/distributors were either *big* winners or *big* losers last year, with the exception of Sanctuary Woods which reported almost "normal" returns (see Johnny Wilson's Editorial, page 20, for related information).

Although it's still operating in the red, Activision logged the biggest turn-around with a 120 percent stock price increase over last year, most of which is attributable to MechWarrior 2's success. Microsoft and Broderbund were the big earnings per share winners, thanks to the diversity of their product lines, brand recognition and "evergreen" product upgrades, which, according to Broderbund's marketing promotions manager, Eric Winkler, "offsets the hit-driven entertainment market."

So, if diversity is the answer, what's the secret of Sierra's success? Well, according to the Standard & Poors' stock reports, "strategic acquisitions will continue to bolster the company's product line and programming capabilities."—*Jill Anderson*

Company	Symbol	$ per share 12/30/94	$ per share 12/29/95	% Change in 1995	Earnings per share '95	Cashflow per share '95	Earnings per share '94	Cashflow per share '94
Acclaim Entertainment	AKLM	14.38	12.38	-13.90%	0.86	0.20	1.00	0.93
Activision	ATVI	5.00	11.00	120.00%	-0.11	0.06	-0.97	-0.32
Atari Corp.	ATC	3.81	1.38	-63.90%	n/a	n/a	0.16	0.29
Broderbund Software	BROD	46.75	60.75	29.90%	1.72	1.33	0.55	0.42
Creative Technology	CREAF	14.25	8.63	-39.50%	0.30	0.37	1.11	1.03
Electronic Arts	ERTS	19.25	26.13	35.70%	1.07	0.88	0.86	0.74
GameTek	GAME	2.38	1.88	-21.10%	-2.05	-1.78	0.15	0.03
Microsoft	MSFT	61.13	87.75	43.60%	2.32	2.07	1.88	1.87
[1]Sanctuary Woods	SWMCF	2.75	2.88	4.50%	n/a	n/a	-0.53	[2]-0.57
Sierra On-Line	SIER	17.13	28.75	67.90%	0.74	0.24	0.59	0.29
Spectrum HoloByte	SBTY	13.50	6.50	-51.90%	-0.91	0.64	5.54	0.42

All figures obtained from America OnLine

[1] 1995 Year-end results not available

[2] Calculated from Operating Costs divided by Average Weighted Shares Outstanding

ON THE SHELF



ed into various aspects of Sato's consciousness. When navigating through Tong Nou's striking, surreal landscape with a standard point-and-click interface, you encounter dozens of quirky characters and paradoxical situations. Unfortunately, the process of death and rebirth perpetually sidetracks you from completing tasks and finding clues, making gameplay frustrating. —*K. Hunter*

Sony Imagesoft, (310)449-2393; ***IBM/Mac CD-ROM***

Reader Service # 304

GRAND PRIX MANAGER

CG GOLD

Interested in the business of Formula I racing? Ed Grabowski (designer of Air Bucks) lets you hire a crew, seek out sponsorships, design a car from the ground up, sign service contracts with parts, fuel, and tire providers, and manage the strategy of competing on a Formula I race circuit. The game offers incredible detail for control junkies, but race fans may find themselves a little frustrated by being limited to a blimp's-eye view of extremely small cars while watching/managing each race. The overhead course views are like the diagrams you'd expect to see in *Autocourse*, the annual for Grand Prix racing. In short, Grand Prix Manager is flawed, but interesting. —*J. Wilson*



Spectrum HoloByte (510) 522-1164; ***IBM CD-ROM***

Reader Service #305

MECHWARRIOR 2: PENTIUM EDITION

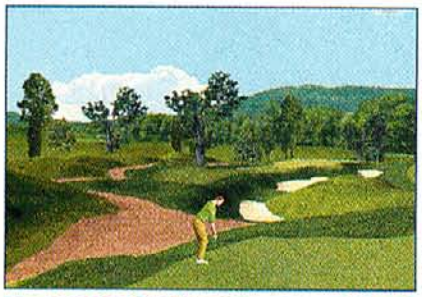
CG GOLD

The first thing I did with the Win 95 version of

New Golf Games Will Club It Out With Links

Three new golf games are going after a chunk of the green long dominated by Access' LINKS line of computer golf titles. Grolier's new GREG NORMAN'S ULTIMATE CHALLENGE GOLF should be among the most graphically impressive. It incorporates photo-realistic course terrain using Intel's 3DR technology, as well as radar photography for realistic-looking courses. ULTIMATE CHALLENGE GOLF uses the now-standard power meter to simulate the on-screen golfer's swing.

Newcomer Headgate, however, takes a different approach. Demonstrated at the recent Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, the new THE GOLF CLUB (working title) uses physics-based algorithms to calculate ball bounce, spin and roll. You control a 3-D golfer who twists, swings, hooks and slices according to your mouse movement. As the 3-D golfer moves, you can adjust the smoothness and speed of the swing, as well as the address of the ball, with the smoothness and speed of your mouse. Clicking the mouse determines the timing for actual contact with the ball. Designed and programmed by Vance Cook, designer of Access' WORLD CLASS LEADER BOARD (LINKS' ancestor), and one of the project leaders on the LINKS products, THE GOLF CLUB has an entirely different feel than previous golf games.



Headgate's THE GOLF CLUB uses a full 3-D model of the golfer, and his swing is controlled by your mouse, offering a new feel to computer golf games.

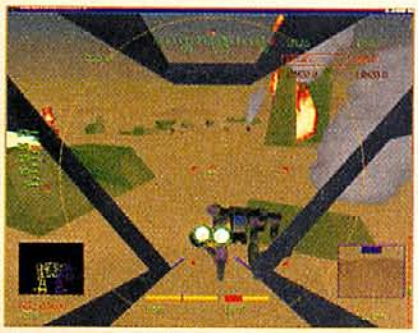
Interplay Productions takes a third approach with its VR GOLF '96. This simulation, appearing first on the Sony PlayStation, then migrating to the PC, will use motion-capture technology to let you control the swings and movement of the on-screen golfers. VR GOLF '96 will use the traditional swing-meter metaphor, along with 3-D technology from their VR Sports series that allows you to see multiple views of your shots simultaneously via a split-screen. This requires true 3-D scenery throughout, so the team abandoned photographic matte techniques and customary two-and-a-half dimensional art tricks in favor of a full 360-degree virtual environment.

Different tastes will dictate whether gamers will opt for the faster playing speed expected from the VR GOLF '96 approach or the more satisfying interface metaphor for THE GOLF CLUB. One factor which seems certain is that the appearance of these new cutting-edge golf simulations should provide new incentive for Access to finish their next-generation LINKS product.—*J. Wilson*

Something Wicked This Way Comes

There's a new system in town from Zephyr Computer that may be in your future. It's a Pentium 166 MHz rig completely tricked out for gaming. It ships with a SOUND BLASTER 16 sound card, Sony speakers (yes, and a sub-woofer too), a Logitech WINGMAN EXTREME joystick, and your choice of 17-inch monitors. We only had time to give it a quick look, but its CPU performance is about 11 percent faster than a Gateway 2000 P5-133 in WinBench CPUMark tests. In the April issue we'll put it through its paces and tell you what we find.—*Dave Salvatore*

Zephyr: 800-448-8806



MECHWARRIOR 2 was to set up a Trial of Grievance. Then I noticed 1024x768 mode wasn't available. My Pentium lives, breathes, and dreams 1024x768, so I was left with an ugly little box in the middle of my screen. Then there was the frequent popping-up of annoying dialog boxes, explaining how to adjust options and giving me useless bits of clan lore. After running this gauntlet of annoyance, I entered battle. There I was, running full speed, torso twisted, about to bite into a tasty piece of Summoner back armor, when everything froze. I waited. I pounded the controls. Nothing. I attempted to task switch. That was when I realized that not only had the universe frozen, but Win 95 had decided to join it.

And to think, I almost gave away my DOS version. —*Greg Fortune*

Activision (800) 477-3650; ***Win 95 CD***

Reader Service # 306

HYPER 3-D PINBALL

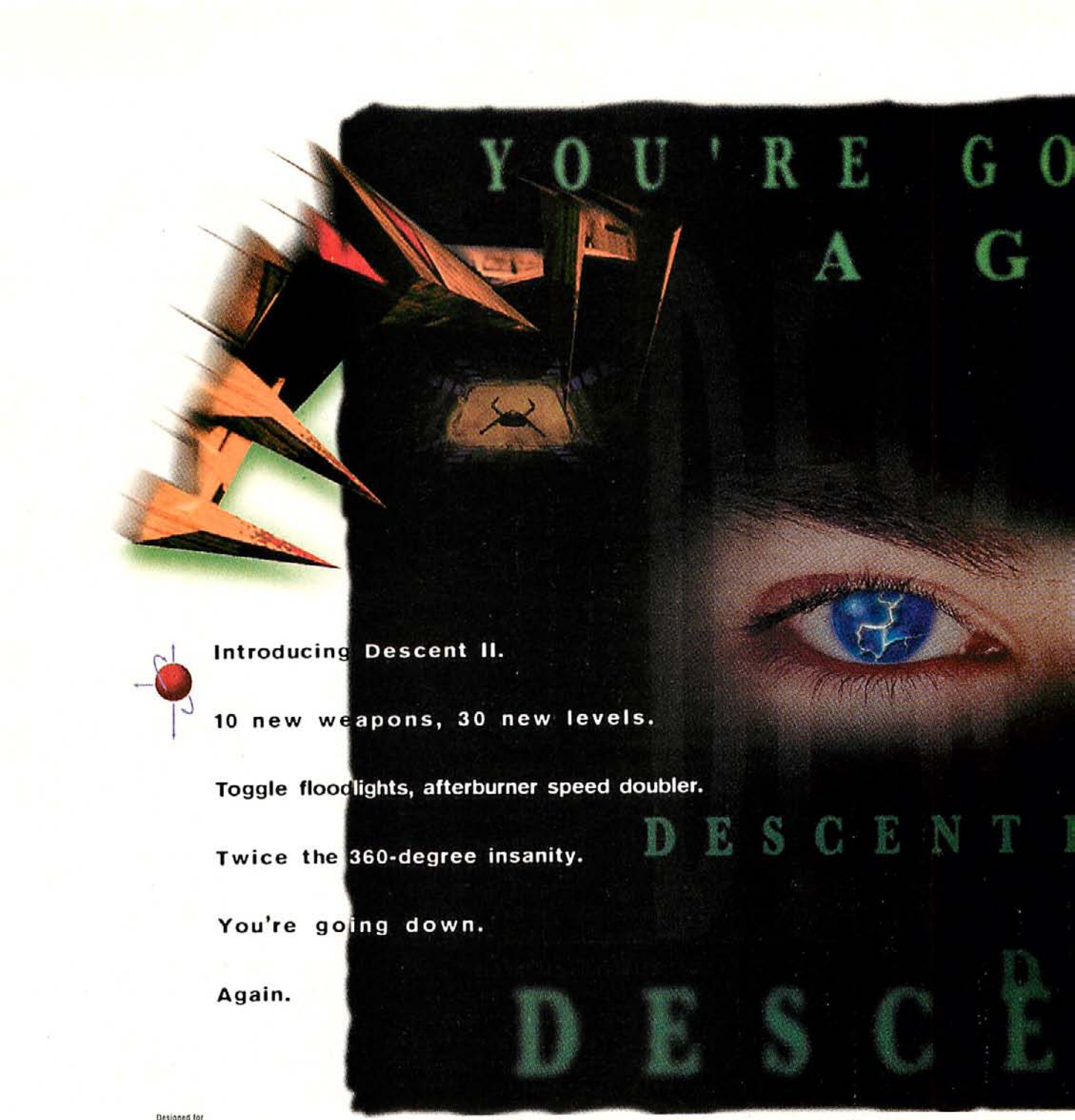
This new pinball title is a flash from the past so realistic, you'll be tempted to push the keyboard and nudge your monitor. Virgin does an excellent job of capturing the excitement and intensity of the pinball arcade games of yore. There are six tables in all, each with its own character, music and surprises.



HYPER 3-D PINBALL mastery requires deft hand-eye coordination. You control the game with the right and left shift buttons on the keyboard, which mimic the feel of the old pinball machine flippers. Keyboard controls even allow you to virtually nudge the table left, right and bump it forward to keep your ball in play—but be careful, it still tilts! —*J. Anderson*

Virgin Interactive, 800-874-4607; ***PC CD-ROM***

Reader service #307



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Toggle floodlights, afterburner speed doubler.

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DESCENT™ II

Download the 3-level demo at http://www.interplay.com

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DTP2

TERROR T.R.A.X.: TRACK OF THE VAMPIRE

You would expect something better from a part owner of TSR and the heir to one of the greatest science fiction characters of all time (Buck



Rogers). This digital equivalent of a "Choose Your Own Adventure" book has a maximum of two choices every few minutes. You don't maneuver your on-screen character; you don't decide what to search; and you don't decide what dialogue to use. You simply sit back to watch bad acting and poor cinematography until you get to an intervention point where you can do "A" or "B." The set-up is pretty clever. The player commands a top-secret rescue squad dealing with the supernatural, but the execution is so poor that it makes TEKWAR look like a masterpiece. *—J. Wilson*

3 Prong Plug, (800)285-4534; ***IBM CD-ROM***

Reader Service # 308

TIE FIGHTER COLLECTOR'S CD

Darth Vader has just left the building. This excellent LucasArts collection bundles the original 5-star TIE FIGHTER space simulation, the DEFENDER OF THE EMPIRE campaign add-on disk, and an entirely new campaign addition: ENEMIES OF THE EMPIRE.



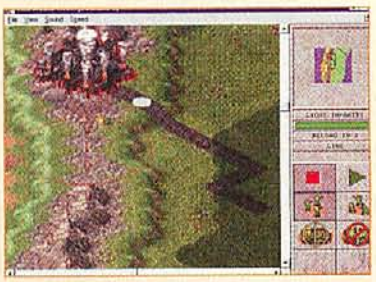
TIE FIGHTER was an excellent space combat game, and the DEFENDER campaign strongly supplemented the title. The CD updates it all with SVGA combat graphics, voice mission briefings and a new spacecraft to fly. The new ENEMIES OF THE EMPIRE campaign will provide TIE FIGHTER veterans with the challenge of a lifetime. If you've never played TIE FIGHTER, the TIE COLLECTOR'S CD is a must-buy. If you already own TIE FIGHTER, the $15 rebate still makes it worthwhile. *—E. Chin*

LucasArts Entertainment, (800) STARWAR; ***IBM 486-66 CD***

Reader Service #309

THIS MEANS WAR

With an interface similar to COMMAND AND CONQUER, the real-time action in this wargame will appeal to pyromaniacs who just wanna have fun. You compete with other warlords for domi-



nation of post-apocalypse Earth, planning attack and defense strategies while simultaneously building up your infrastructure. Fortunately, it's not all explosions; the challenge of budgeting resources to create a productive base depends on using mineral sources effectively, controlling population size and creating specialists. Also, if you spend too much time looking after the home turf, your soldiers will march LEMMINGS-like to their destruction. *—K. Hunter*

MicroProse (410) 771-1151; ***IBM CD-ROM***

Reader Service # 310

TOSHIBA 3701

The 3701 proudly continues Toshiba's tradition of shipping high performance, very reliable, but ultimately unexciting CD-ROM drives. The 3701 sorely lacks amenities, with the sole concession to usability being its slightly flimsy, but effectual caddyless tray. Toshiba touts this as a "6.7x" drive, with a 1 MB per second transfer rate and a 130 millisecond access time. It scored a 690 on the WinBench 96's CD-ROM WinMark, which *is* 10 percent faster than the competition. Be warned, installation is somewhat challenging, and may best be performed by someone with technical savvy with SCSI devices. *—L. Case*



The Benjamin Group, Inc. (714) 753-0755

Reader Service # 311

GROLIER SCIENCE FICTION MULTIMEDIA ENCYCLOPEDIA

Most reference works on CD are tame, pale copies of their pulp brethren. This, however, is something special. It isn't as fully interactive as you might wish, but it cleverly uses hotlinks, photos and sound bites to place your favorite (and not-so-favorite) SF authors into perspective. The commentaries, from Peter Nicholls and John Clute, are even-handed, lucid and even entertaining. Every major literary work, from H.G. Wells (and before) to the vicissitudes of



SF's New Age movement and beyond, are keenly examined. All in all, Grolier did a nice job balancing respect with valid criticisms of hundreds of science-fiction works, from books to film, TV and even comics. This collection is an indispensible reference for serious SF scholars, die-hard fans, or those who think that all science-fiction begins and ends with *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. *—T. Coleman*

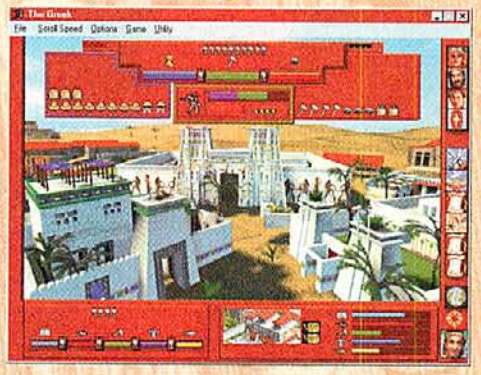
Grolier Electronic Publishing, (203) 797-3530; ***IBM CD-ROM***

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D... Destiny.

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With stunning computer rendered 3-D graphics,

D... Delirium.

D's descent into the dark pit of your soul is a

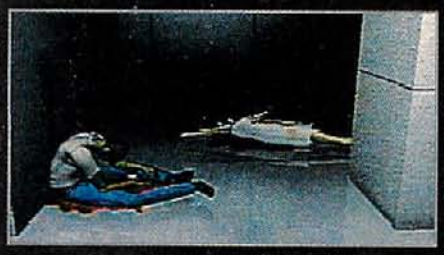
D... Death.

tour-de-force of terrifying secrets and challenges.

D... Damnation.



"SLICK, STYLISH, SCARY FUN!"–GAME PLAYERS



DON'T PLAY IT IN THE DARK!

Circle Reader Service #67

TEEN T AGES 13+ W A P PC CD ROM PlayStation ™ SEGA SATURN

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Acclaim entertainment, inc.

SIGHTINGS

Here's an early look at the space invaders that will be vying for room on your hard drive. Some of these games are still months away, and they aren't even playable yet, but at least you can see what they look like, and get an idea what their intentions are.

Command & Conquer: Red Alert

This sequel to Virgin/Westwood Studio's blockbuster COMMAND & CONQUER is actually its historical prequel. This is C&C's version of World War II, and if it's what the designers promise, it will be a significant step forward for the C&C line.

In this alternative history, the Nazis never came to power and World War II is a battle between the Allied and Soviet forces. RED ALERT also adds some background to the COMMAND & CONQUER universe; you'll see how the GDI was formed and witness the first rearing of the NOD Brotherhood's ugly head.





There are so many new features in RED ALERT that we only have room for a short list: new units of spies, guard dogs, medic units and lightning-spewing Tesla coils; three "sides" to choose from (Russian, and Northern or Southern Allied commands); complete warfare over air, land and sea; improved control of troops, such as ordering units to stay in formation; six player multiplay; double-sized maps; and the promise of enhanced AI. If the designers can deliver, RED ALERT could set a new standard for real-time strategy games

MissionForce: Cyberstorm

MECHWARRIOR and EARTHSIEGE took the giant robots of strategy game lore and moved them into the world of 3-D simulations. Now MISSIONFORCE: CYBERSTORM from the Dynamix division of Sierra moves them back onto the hex grids. Along with battlefield strategies and weapons upgrades, you'll also have to manage your bio-engineered Herc drivers, keeping them in the action without burning them out. Gamers who loved the classic BATTLEMECH on the Amiga should dig this strategy fest.



Toonstruck

Christopher Loyd's comical exploits combined with hilarious, cartoon-quality animations and an absolutely bizarre world makes TOONSTRUCK an adventure game unlike any we've seen. Gamers help Drew Blanc (played by Loyd) escape a zany cartoon world of his own making—subconscious thought can really be a pain! The bizarre world is filled with the saccharin-sweet characters he's been forced to draw for 10 years, as well as sick, darker characters that lurk in the corners of his mind. Cartoon fans will see many of their favorite animated characters—from Ren & Stimpy to the old Warner Bros. stars ("Eh, what's up Doc?"). The designers pay homage to virtually everyone on the toob. The all-over-the-board humor is delicious, shifting from the dry to the slapstick to the cruel and sadistic.



Third Reich

Complex, quirky and nearly a way of life, the granddaddy of WWII European wargames should finally hit an IBM-compatible shore near you soon—with the board game systems intact. The AI has been rebuilt, so that the nightmare computer opponents of previous THIRD REICH games should, thankfully, be missing in action. If you wondered where all the hardcore wargames have gone, look no further.



Hands On

These are the games in development we've actually spent some time playing. They represent some of the most interesting titles in the Pipeline, and they are complete enough to actually tell how they're going to play. Most should be released soon.

Total Mayhem

Just like the greasy '70s disco-funk that has returned to the airwaves, computer games from a previous generation are also making a comeback. Domark is following suit with its real-time action-strategy title, TOTAL MAYHEM.

The game's high-res 3-D graphics and isometric perspective are reminiscent of CRUSADER: NO REMORSE. And although the version we saw wasn't quite as sharp-looking as Origin's breakthrough action game, TOTAL MAYHEM still looks mighty fine.



The game's premise: You command an elite squadron of robotic freedom fighters, duking it out with the Interplanetary Resource Control's 65 different enemy robots over 3-D terrains. Simple!

TOTAL MAYHEM could be described as a real-time version of X-COM. You maneuver your squadron around the map as an individual or in a group, and supply them with ammunition, med-kits, etc. One thing is certain—the pace of the game will be nothing less than frenetic. At times we wondered if it might be too fast; it was rather discouraging to break our squad apart, only to have the troopers instantly killed simply because we couldn't instruct them fast enough.

The advantages that this title has over CRUSADER are that your troopers gain experience through combat, and after each mission you can outfit your team with new weapons, armor and supplies. Another bonus is network play, which, if Domark gets it right, will allow up to eight players to duke it out over pre-designed multi-player levels.

There will be 20 missions in the game, and a flexible level editor will let you create new missions to your hearts' content.

What's old is new again, I guess. I wonder if this means my huge collection of Commodore 64 games will be worth something someday...

—George Jones

Domark; (415) 513-8929

PC CD-ROM

Z

Z is a real-time strategy game that combines COMMAND & CONQUER-style warfare with elements of fast action games.

You assume the conn, commanding a group of soldiers and maneuvering from planet to planet while waging war on your adversaries. You won't have to bother with building or harvesting anything here. Instead, the objective is more like capture-the-flag.



Here's how it works: each territory is comprised of a dozen or so squares. In each square is a flag and either a robot production or vehicle production plant. The side that touches the flag first controls the square and its attendant production facility. To win each scenario, you must destroy your enemy's beginning stronghold. But to do that, you'll need a good-sized army, which in turn requires a healthy production base. Thus, the game becomes a race to see who can control the most squares, then quickly degenerates to a hard-hitting melee as you attempt to wrest control of each square from your enemy.

Aside from capturing the flag and the COMMAND & CONQUER elements, Z also throws in a foul-mouthed, mechanical general who either berates or salutes you after each mission, and a pair of Beavis and Butthead-like delivery boys who ferry your army between scenarios. Humorous, fast-paced and crowded with dismembered body parts and debris, Z promises to be a very stressful and challenging strategy title that ups the ante on real-time wargaming.

—Elliott Chin

Virgin Interactive, (800) 874-4607

PC CD-ROM

FANTASY GENERAL

Panzerheads who found ALLIED GENERAL lacking may find FANTASY GENERAL's fantastical campaigns more to their liking. The wonderfully aggressive AI from PANZER GENERAL is back for renewed human-bashing, this time supported by beastly grunts—Orc shock troops, Goblin Light Infantry, Bronzemen and Werebears, to name but a few. Quick play is everything: rarely do you have more than 15 units per side in a battle. The "over-strength" units of PG are gone, but each unit is rated for melee, skirmish, defense, spellcasting,

Hands On



armor and ability to resist magic. Damage in combat is split between deaths, which cannot be healed during a battle; and wounds, which can.

Combat has a nice medieval fantasy feel due to the use of skirmishers, which are weak but effective against slow-moving troops. The siege machines—which include not only catapults, but the aptly-named Disease Throwers—are much like artillery in PANZER GENERAL, except they support units on offense. Defensive fire support is provided by Elf Archers, and the hit-and-run tactics of the Undead Cavalry would impress even Genghis Khan's finest. Add Balloon-Men Bombadiers, Green Dragons and Roc Knights for fighter support, with a healthy mix of Magic spells and items, and you have the biggest potential for a run-away wargame hit since... well, PANZER GENERAL—especially since FG's campaign mode is very reminiscent of its storied predecessor.

—Terry Coleman

Strategic Simulations, Inc., (800) 245-4525

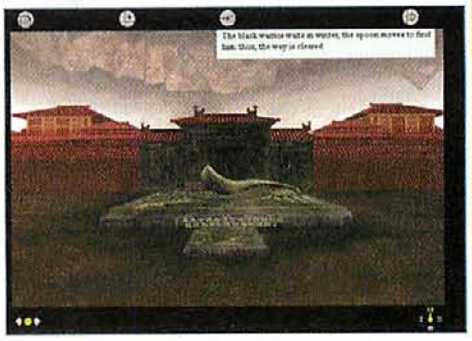
PC CD-ROM

▸Qin: Tomb of the Middle Kingdom

Journey to 21st century Xian, the resting place of China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi. Huangdi was a tyrant who built an elaborate tomb for himself, guarded by thousands of terra-cotta soldiers and booby-trapped with crossbows and ingenious traps. Inside lies a treasure, hidden and guarded for thousands of years.

In QIN, you stumble onto the entrance of the Emperor's tomb. You must find the treasure within and return to the outside, all amidst the backdrop of civil war. Other forces are also after the treasures of the Qin tomb, and if they find it first an awful fate awaits. But finding the treasure won't be easy. The tomb's traps are still lethal and challenging even after thousands of years of dormancy.

While recent adventure games have taken a turn toward unnecessary puzzles, the designers of QIN have made a serious attempt to integrate the puzzles into the adventure. But even though they have succeeded in making most puzzles quite challenging, some still seem a bit frivolous. As for accuracy, some puzzles are



obviously fictitious—I doubt you'd find puzzles based on Chinese characters in a real tomb, where even the village idiots could figure them out.

QIN does have beautiful graphics and a decent story line, but movement in the game is far from ideal. In the prerelease version, movement was often stilted and limited to 90 degree turns. Hopefully, the designers will be able to take care of this before the game's release.

On a brighter note, I give QIN high marks for its realism and attention to visual detail. The designers also deserve credit for including ancient Chinese characters, Mandarin voices, a soundtrack of Chinese music, and a detailed encyclopedia of Chinese history and anthropology.—*Elliott Chin*

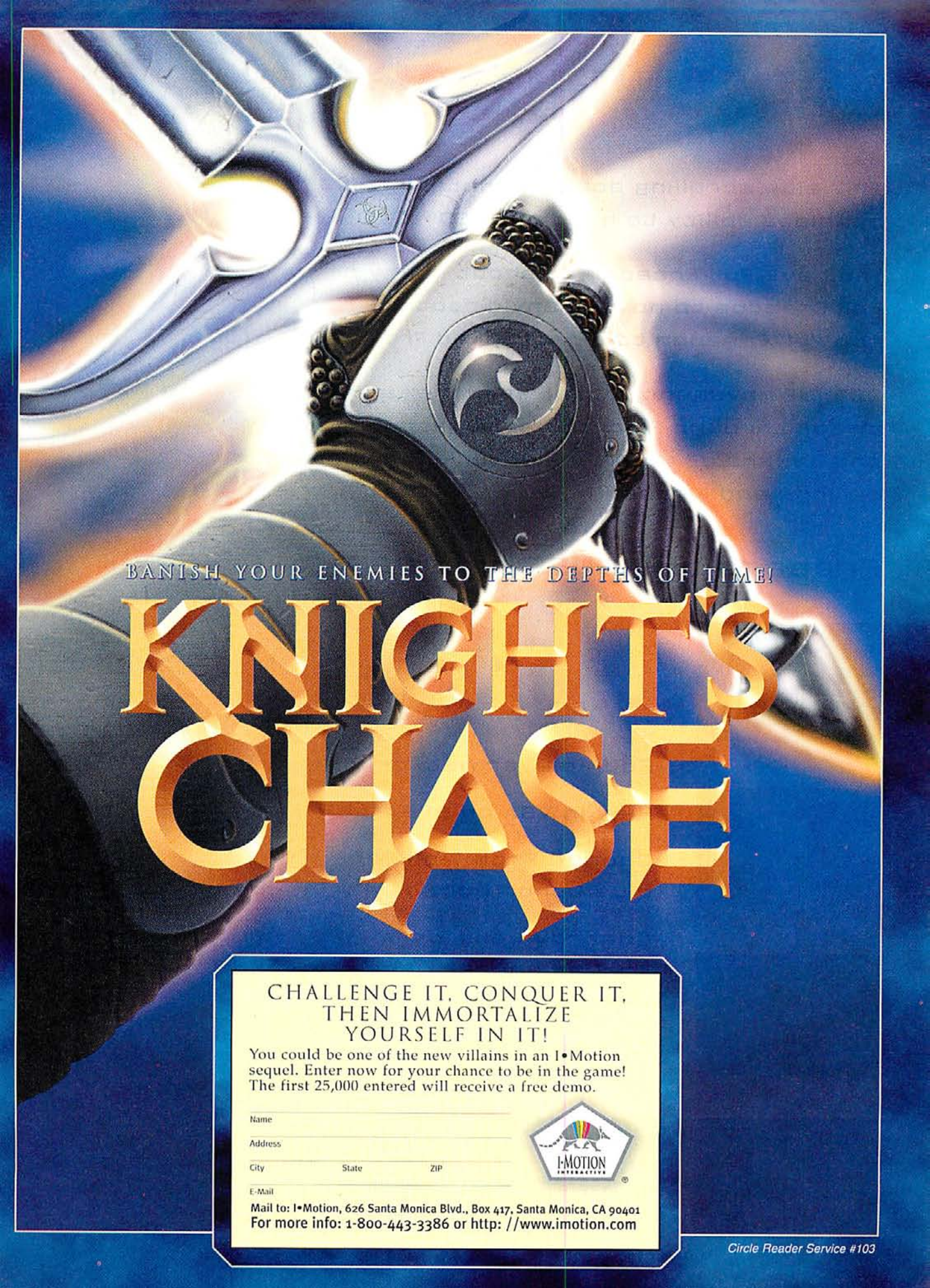
Time Warner (212) 522-4643

PC CD-ROM

PIPELINE

Estimated release dates based on the latest information from developers.

GAME NAME, COMPANY	RELEASE DATE
PAD&D Deathkeep SSI	5/96
Afterlife LucasArts	Spring 96
Age of Rifles SSI	7/96
Alexander the Great SSI	Summer 96
Alien Trilogy Acclaim	4/96
Azrael's Tear Mindscape	6/96
C&C: Red Alert Westwood/Virgin	5/96
Callahan's Saloon Legend	9/96
Chaos Overlords New World	3/96
Chessmaster 5000 Mindscape	4/96
Conquest of the New World Interplay	4/96
Daggerfall Bethesda	Q1/96
Dungeon Keeper Bullfrog/EA	3/96
Earthsiege II Sierra	3/96
Fantasy General SSI	3/96
Guardians of Destiny Virgin	Q2/96
History of the World Avalon Hill	8/96
Invulnerables Bullfrog/EA	Summer 96
Jagged Alliance Gold	Summer 96
Lighthouse Sierra	6/96
Magic of Xanth Legend	Fall 96
Magic the Gathering MicroProse	Summer 96
Master of Orion 2 MicroProse	Q2/96
MegaRace 2 Mindscape	4/96
Metal Lords New World	Spring 96
Micro League Baseball 96 MicroLeague	6/96
Mission Force: Cyberstorm Sierra OnLine	Spring 96
Monty Python & Holy Grail 7th Level	Summer 96
Over the Reich Avalon Hill	5/96
Pandora Directive Access	3/96
Pax Imperia II Blizzard	Q1/96
Panzerblitz Avalon Hill	3/96
Qin Time Warner	5/96
Realms of Arkania 3 Sir Tech	3/96
Return to Krondor 7th Level	6/96
Ripper Take 2	Spring 96
Robert E. Lee Sierra	6/96
Sid Meier's Civilization II MicroProse	3/96
Space Bucks Impressions/Sierra	3/96
Spycraft Activision	Q1/96
Star Fleet Academy Interplay	Summer 96
Star Trader Mindscape	6/96
Super Heroes MicroProse	Q2/96
Terra Nova Virgin	3/96
The Dame Was Loaded Philips	4/96
The Last Blitzkrieg SSG	Q1/96
Theme Hospital Bullfrog/EA	4/96
Third Reich Avalon Hill	6/96
Threshold Mindscape	5/96
Timelapse GTE Entertainment	8/96
Toonstruck Virgin	Q3/96
Total Mayhem Domark	5/96
X-Com 3: The Apocalypse MicroProse	Fall 96
VR Soccer Interplay	3/96
Z Virgin	Q2/96
Wizardry Gold Sir Tech	3/96
1943 European Air War MicroProse	Q2/96
10th Planet Bethesda	9/96



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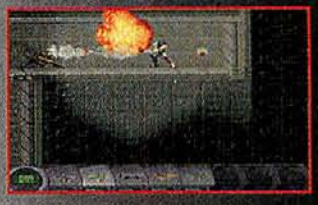












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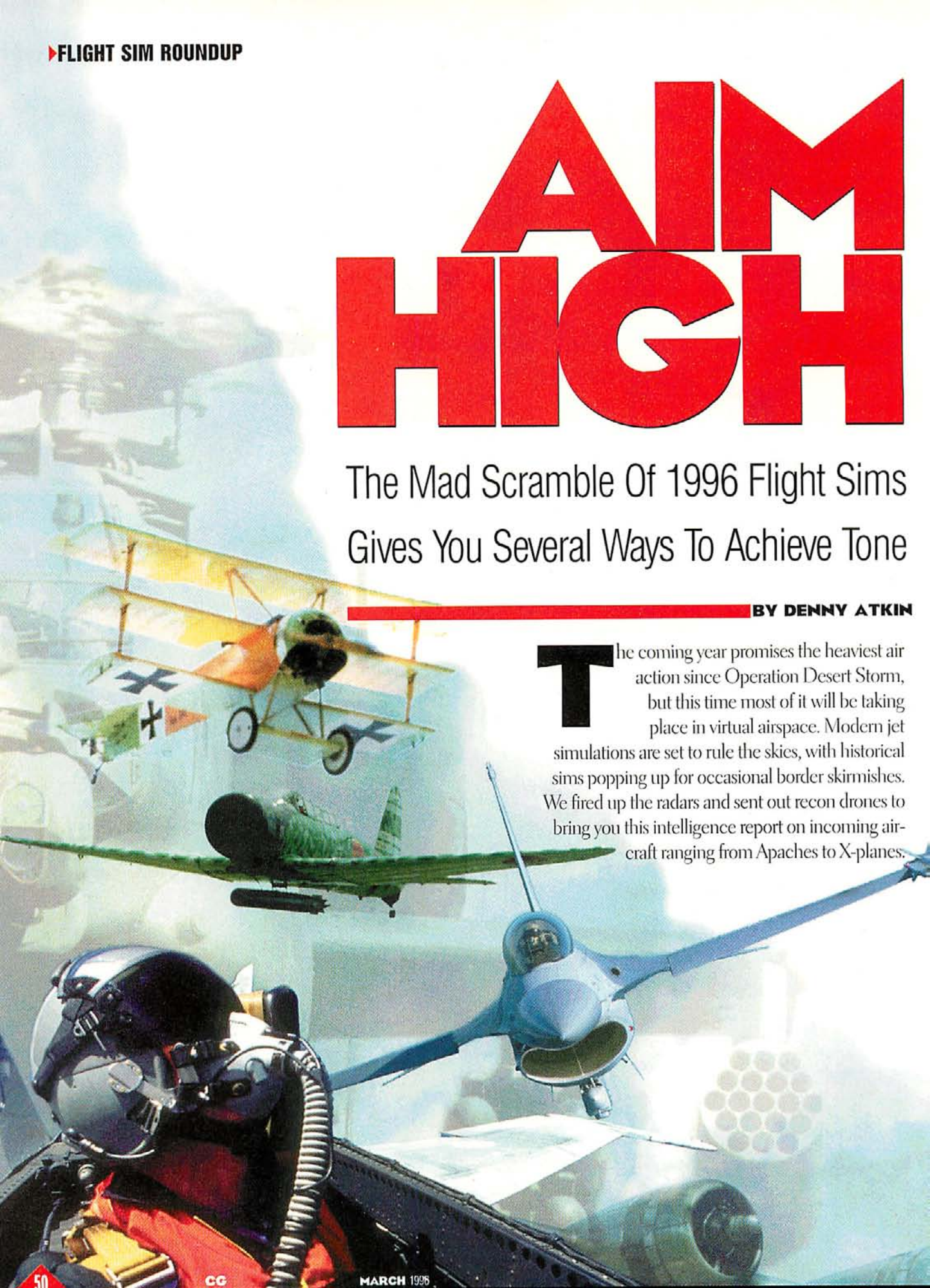
Circle Reader Service #142

AIM HIGH

The Mad Scramble Of 1996 Flight Sims Gives You Several Ways To Achieve Tone

BY DENNY ATKIN

The coming year promises the heaviest air action since Operation Desert Storm, but this time most of it will be taking place in virtual airspace. Modern jet simulations are set to rule the skies, with historical sims popping up for occasional border skirmishes. We fired up the radars and sent out recon drones to bring you this intelligence report on incoming aircraft ranging from Apaches to X-planes.



THE F-16S COMETH

The Lockheed F-16 Fighting Falcon has been a favorite choice of sim developers, and for good reason. A superb close-range dogfighter, the F-16 is also an adept strike aircraft, capable of carrying up to 12,000 pounds of air-to-air and air-to-mud weaponry. Likewise, the F-16 is a natural choice for flight sims, since the plane's flexibility lets designers send gamers on a wide variety of missions.

IRAQ-ING UP KILLS

A squadron of F-16 sims is flying onto shelves over the course of this year, aiming to usurp FALCON 3.0's long-standing status as the king of serious flight simulations. First on the block should be BACK TO BAGHDAD, from newcomer Military Simulations, Inc. This simulation of a hypothetical Second Gulf War straps you into the cockpit of an F-16C Block 50 and sends you on over 60 missions into Iraq, many of which duplicate missions flown in Operation Desert Storm.

MSI's design specifications indicate that this is one of the most ambitious attempts at exactly duplicating a plane's systems (and its flight environment) yet. The sim is set to model *nine* modes of the F-16's APG-68 radar system, and you'll need to learn to manage details such as antenna elevation and azimuth to get a lock on the enemy. If you're a real stickler for realism, you can even dig out that old Hercules monochrome video card and monitor from the attic, stick it in your Pentium system, and use the second monitor as a dedicated radar display.

A full 6 DOF (degrees of freedom) flight model is promised, along with detailed terrain based on the same French satellite imagery used



BAGHDAD SHUFFLE Actual satellite imagery of Iraq lends authenticity to BACK TO BAGHDAD's missions.

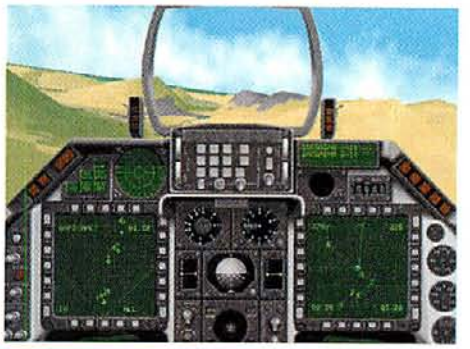
by General Schwartzkopf prior to the Gulf War. If the usual load of Mavericks, Sidewinders, AMRAAMS, and iron bombs doesn't seem to be giving Saddam a bad enough day, you can also drop the B-46 tactical nuclear weapon. If the designers live up to most of their stated goals, BACK TO BAGHDAD will make FALCON 3.0 look like a novice's sim. If all this wasn't enough, MSI is also promising to release a version with Internet play later in 1996, with support for over 50 players per session.



FRONT LINE FALCON

Next in the pattern is F-16 FIGHTING FALCON, from the team of Digital Integration and Interactive Magic. This isn't Digital Integration's first try at an F-16 simulation. The company's F-16 COMBAT PILOT—released over five years ago for the Amiga, Atari ST, and EGA PC—was a standard-setter for its time. F-16 FIGHTING FALCON is slated to continue that tradition of realism and sophistication. The design document we examined indicated that DI's simulating just about every control in the F-16's cockpit except the air-conditioning knob. If you're not a sim ace yet, don't despair. A free-for-all arcade mode is promised as well.

The product was originally slated for release this spring, but DI decided to put its resources into finishing HIND first, so look for it this fall. The extra time will be spent revamping the gouraud-shading graphics engine used in APACHE and HIND, adding texture mapping and other enhancements. Resolutions up to 800x600 will be supported, so F-16 FIGHTING FALCON should look good *and* feel good.



RE-ENGINED FALCON Digital Integration is replacing F-16 FIGHTING FALCON's APACHE-style terrain engine, shown here, with a new texture-mapped design.

Mission structure looks similar to that of APACHE and HIND, with training missions, single missions, network play, and a campaign mode. Expect a dramatically enhanced version of the mission planner found in TORNADO as well.

VAPOR BIRD

But what of the game that everyone's been waiting for, Spectrum Holobyte's FALCON 4.0? Don't hold your breath on this one, folks. Although Spectrum Holobyte treated the press to a sneak-peek at this sequel to 1991's FALCON 3.0 way back in late 1994, nowadays the company won't say anything about it other than it's expected to ship late this year.

At the preview, we saw preliminary work on a more detailed terrain engine, much-improved aircraft models, and a 3-D base environment that players would work in between missions. However, this was well over a year-and-a-half ago, and most of that development team has moved on to other projects or other companies. With Spectrum's silence on the title and TOP GUN still not shipping at press time, we'll be surprised to see FALCON 4.0 this year.

FUTURE FIGHTERS

There are plenty of doomsayers who predict worldwide chaos or even Armageddon in the year 2000. If it doesn't happen, they can at least turn to the profusion of upcoming sims that simulate major conflicts at the end of the Millennium.

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Hmmn, what shall it be today? Ah yes, let's go with the Crimson Rage Axe and the Bloodhaven Shield. We'll mow those suckers down!



This must be the entrance to the Scar. Let's see what lies beyond that insane cliff...



What a great old water mill! I wonder if it still works...



What kind of name is "Ianmyrth?" I hope this dude doesn't cast some ugly spell my way.



Finally! The entrance to the fabled Land of Roots.



Right on. I could get cool weaponry, armor, artifacts, spells, or even a signet key to unlock doors out of this deal. Oooh, it's the "Potion of Healing." That could come in handy down the road.

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"Mothers hold your children; children hold your tongue. For here you step and to the ..... you go."

What the devil is he talking about? I thought these know-it-all talking ornaments were supposed to give clues, not riddle me to death.



Holy @#$%&!, it's the Laughing Skull of Thunderous Might. I'm outta here.



This old geyser is the Land of Root's caretaker. Tried to frighten me off my quest by warning me about all the nasty things that will happen to me in this dungeon. Not a chance, pops.



Can Fungus Man withstand my Ash and Cinders spell blast? I didn't think so.



The wind is blowin' me around like crazy...How do they expect me to get past this spike trap if I can't even control my movement?



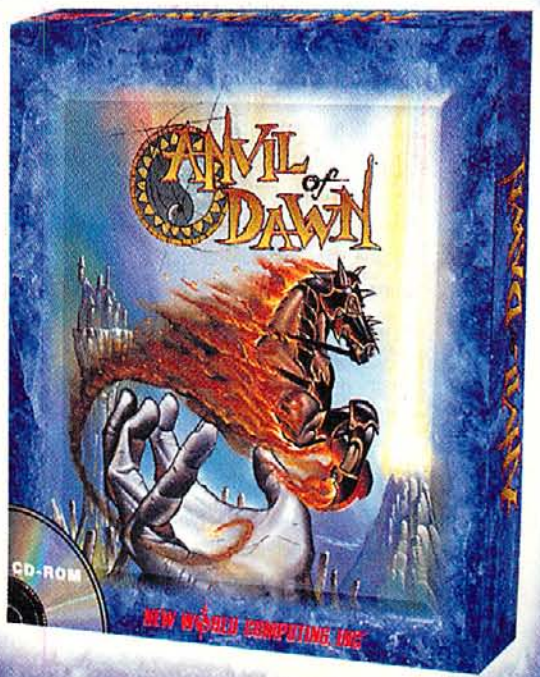
What's going on here...nobody told me about this. Wait a second, what's his name *was* telling the truth. The fate of the whole quest hinges on my next move...



It's a tree sprite. Looks like she'll guide me to my next adventure beyond the Scar and into the legendary Reed Plane. Maybe it can wait until tomorrow...maybe not.

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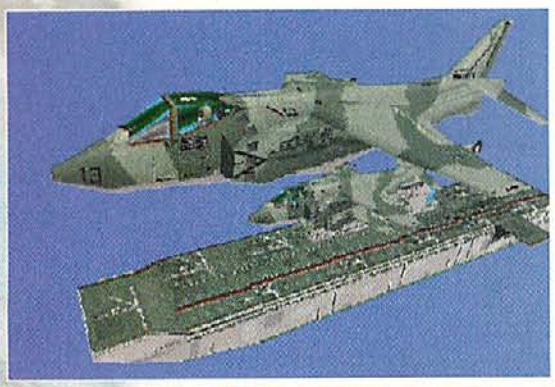
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Circle Reader Service #139

PLANE JANE'S

ADVANCED TACTICAL FIGHTERS, the first in EA/Origin's new *Jane's Combat Simulations* line, drops you into three frighteningly viable conflicts. One features the U.S. backing the Egyptian government after an Islamic military takeover, while another has the U.S. defending Belgium and The Netherlands after those countries refuse to join a trade embargo against the French. There's also a Russian scenario, a follow-up to the USNF campaign. This one teams U.S. forces with the Siberian Freedom Party in combat over Vladivostok as it attempts to dethrone the hard-line Russian government.



HARRIER CARRIER FLYING NIGHTMARES 2 straps you into the cockpits of both AV-8B Harriers, shown here, and AH-1W SuperCobra helicopters.

ATF's calling card is its unique cadre of aircraft, all based on data acquired through EA's alliance with Jane's, a publisher respected as the world authority on military information. You'll fly missions in advanced planes like the Lockheed F-117A Nighthawk stealth fighter, the Northrop B-2 Spirit stealth bomber, and the Dassault Rafale. However, ATF doesn't stop with the present. It also presents combat versions of a number of the Grumman X-29 FSW (forward-swept wing) research aircraft and the Rockwell-Messerschmitt X-31 thrust-vectoring test plane. Finally, there's the F-32 Ghost Hawk, based on Lockheed's proposal for the ASTOVL (Advanced Short Take-Off, Vertical Landing) strike fighter competition. These latter aircraft offer performance advantages that change the rules of air-to-air combat. The X-31's thrust vectoring, for example, allows you to point its nose up to 60 degrees off the current direction of travel, so you can keep your opponent in your sights no matter how maneuverable he is.

ATF is based on an updated version of the simulation engine used in U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS and MARINE FIGHTERS, so you can expect similar single-mission and campaign offerings. One enhancement, though, promises to make this a whole new ball game—network support. The version currently in testing supports up to eight network players, as well as modem and direct serial play. (Modem play may be dropped before the product ships.) Designer Brent Iverson says net play is based around single missions rather than a campaign, since few players are able to get together long enough to play a network campaign. Cooperative and competitive play are supported, with any mix of players on each side. Canned missions aren't just of the simple head-to-head variety—strike, dogfighting, intercept, escort, and anti-ship are among the mission types available.



SMOKIN! A missile curves off in the distance as this JETFIGHTER III F-22 enters urban combat.

Perhaps most enticing is the ability to fly any plane in the sim in net mode. These include everything from F-4D Phantom and Q-5 Fantan fighters to C-5 transports, a variety of bombers, and the Aurora spy plane. You'll also be able to import planes from USNF and MARINE FIGHTERS. You might pit two players in advanced X-31s against six opponents flying relatively primitive Mirage IIIs, or you can relive Vietnam by matching four F-4Ds against four MiG-21s.

MISSION CRITICAL

Another turn-of-the-century sim, JETFIGHTER III, looks set to surpass even Ocean's EF2000 in terrain detail and accuracy. At the recent Consumer Electronics Show, Mission Studios dropped me into an ejection seat and let me fly the new hi-res beta version. I was left slack-jawed. The version I previewed for the December, 1995 issue was one of the best-looking VGA sims I'd seen, but the addition of 640x480 SVGA graphics moves JF III to the head of the graphics pack. The terrain accuracy is so good that we were able to look at a real map of Chile and pinpoint our exact location. The hilly terrain should make for some interesting dogfight situations.

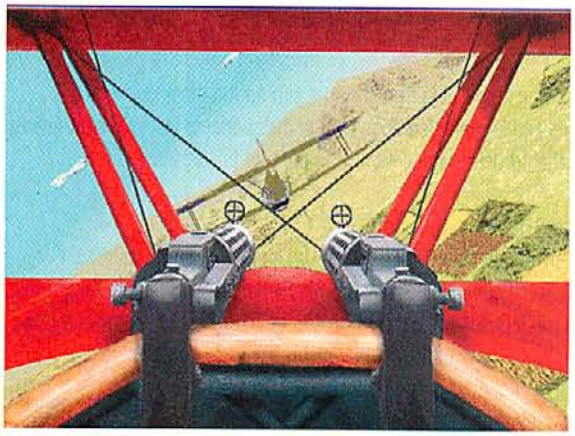
After training around San Francisco, you'll sail to Cuba and attempt to stop the Cuban military from assisting Columbian drug cartels. Once you've put a stop to this nefarious alliance, you'll be deployed to Chile, where you're charged with heading off an Argentinean invasion. Ranging from relatively flat land to the towering Andes mountains to the icy Antarctic Peninsula, the Chilean terrain gives many opportunities for Mission to show off its new scenery engine. The virtual cockpit looks much better than the version we examined back in the December issue; SVGA makes a huge difference in instrument readability.

JF III should please all but the most die-hard of sim fans. Other than the use of the land-based F-22 as a carrier plane (a transgression committed by a surprising number of recent simulations), Mission is only sacrificing accuracy in areas where it benefits gameplay. Originally slated for a January release, at press time Mission was shooting for an April ship date.

HARRIER TIMES

Domark is also sending virtual pilots to Cuba—this time to combat an upcoming hard-line Communist resurgence—with FLYING NIGHTMARES 2. The new GSF16 simulation engine will feature 65,000-color texture-mapped graphics at resolutions up to 1024x768, as well as support for the new 3-D graphics cards.

FN2 is notable as one of the first sims to promise to realistically model both aircraft and helicopters. Pilots will be able to fly both the AV-8B Harrier jump jet and the AH-1W SuperCobra. Domark's Bryan Walker is working with Scott Warren, Chief Flight Test Engineer for the Harrier 2+ project for McDonnell Douglas, to develop the Harrier's flight model. Along with network and head-to-head modem play, there's also a campaign mode where one player can direct ground and air assets using a real-time strategic interface, then



BARON DOWN The pilot of this RED BARON II Fokker Triplane will be painting a British roundel on the side of his plane when he gets home.

fly an aircraft in support of these movements..

CLEARED FOR TAKEOFF

There are a number of other sims still in the embryonic stage; we probably won't see these until 1997. The folks at Looking Glass Technologies are finally granting the wish of all FLIGHT UNLIMITED fans: armed aircraft. The company's goal is to build a combat simulation with graphics and flight models as impressive as those in its freshman aerobatic simulation. To this end, they've put together a design team that includes, among other pilots, a former F-16 driver who's flown missions over Bosnia. This sim won't see the light of day until mid-1997, and at this early stage of development, LGT is interested in finding out what *you* want to see in it. Pop over to *http://www.lglass.com* and answer the online survey.

Other projects still in the rumor stage: Reliable sources say the second Jane's Combat Simulations product from the Andy Hollis team at Origin will be a highly accurate F-22 Lightning II simulation. (Yep, no carrier ops here!) Ocean is currently in the planning stage for the sequel to EF2000, code-named TFX3. Dynamix has had a test-pilot-style jet simulation planned for a while, but that's been put on the back burner in favor of the company's Tigre helicopter sim.

HISTORY LESSONS

Simulations seem to come in phases. Modern jets will rule the shelves for a while, then the World War II piston-engined era will resurface. At the moment the historical sim category is in hibernation, at least as far as single-player flying goes. With only a couple of releases in each World War category this year, real sim pilots, who don't use missiles, won't be faced with much decision-making stress.

BARON VON SEQUEL

Sierra's Dynamix division is working on one of the most anticipated sequels in flight simulation history. RED BARON II is the follow-up to Dynamix's classic 1991 sim, a title so good versions can still be found on store shelves five years later. With such high standards to follow, could RED BARON II possibly live up to its predecessor?

I was able to fly an early version of this biplane sim, and I don't think this update will disappoint. This Win 95 simulator sports fast graphics, with texture-mapped rolling European landscapes and beautifully camouflaged aircraft. Realistic flight models (as you'd expect when one of the key team members is Gary Stottlemyer, one of the driving forces behind Spectrum Holobyte's FALCON 3.0) drive the 42 simulated planes, 22 of which are flyable by the player.

A rich combat environment will include other aircraft flying on independent missions, so you may be faced with decisions such as "do I fly the assigned mission, or attack that group of bombers that seems to be heading toward my aerodrome?" Similar to the campaign generator in EF2000, missions are created by a dynamic generator, so you won't find yourself flying a canned series as you advance your pilot through the ranks. Modem and Network play have been added to this version, and if some performance issues are addressable, Dynamix may be able to support up to 16 players. Look for a full-fledged preview in next month's *CG*.

BATTLES OVER BRITAIN

MicroProse's 1943: THE EUROPEAN AIR WAR takes the successful 1942: THE PACIFIC AIR WAR engine and reworks it as a simulation of the aerial battles against Nazi forces. Like its predecessor, the year means little: the simulation actually starts with the Battle of Britain and ends in 1945 after VE Day.

Starter Sims

If your prior experiences with flight sims have generally involved smacking into runways and mountains at mach speed, don't give up. Some new sims are targeted at the casual gamer who just wants to get up into the skies and shoot something.

If you've seen the movie, you have all the preparation you need to play Spectrum Holobyte's long-delayed TOP GUN: FIRE AT WILL. You'll take on the role of Maverick in this F-14 Tomcat simulation, which, although simplified, features a realistic, deadly assortment of opponent aircraft. Heavy radio traffic—both from other planes and Goose, your back-seater—will help guide you through your missions. Although instrumentation and radar have been simplified, the flight physics are pretty good, and you'll find TOP GUN is a good transition into more realistic simulations.



A-10 ATTACK SILENT THUNDER: A-10 REVENGE is more about action than accuracy.

On the even simpler side is Sierra/Dynamix's SILENT THUNDER: A-10 REVENGE. This game bridges the gaps between 3-D arcade shooters and more realistic flight sims. Forget the typical tactical situations here—this ain't the Air Force, this is Hollywood. You're a mercenary tasked with eliminating Columbian Drug traffickers, aggressive Middle East terrorists, and—get this—North Korean forces who are risking war in an effort to kidnap an international film star. The A-10's flight model here is extremely simple; you won't see much difference over the five-year-old original here. The combat universe is small, and the sharp graphics and rock-and-roll soundtrack highlight SILENT THUNDER's emphasis on game over simulation.

You'll be able to fly for the British, American, or German air forces on a variety of missions, including bomber interception, escort, ground support, and fighter sweeps. Twenty different flyable aircraft are included, and MicroProse plans to use feedback from 1942:PAW to provide better gameplay.

The biggest difference here is the addition of a squadron career. You'll be able to choose a starting level, from wingman to group leader,



SIGHTSEEING RIDES APACHE LONGBOW will feature near-FLIGHT UNLIMITED-quality terrain. And guns too!

and work your way through the ranks. At each level of command you'll gain more control over the group, eventually being given complete control over pilot roster, aircraft armament, and so on. The gameplay will also change just by the nature of the European air war. Missions are more oriented toward strategic bombing, and bomber escort or attack missions will require new strategies. Also, much of your combat will be over populated—and often hostile—lands, rather than empty ocean. Both head-to-head and cooperative missions are supported using modem or network links.

DUEL REDUX

Jaeger Software has started work on FIGHTER DUEL 2, an update that addresses many of the complaints about the company's freshman PC product. FIGHTER DUEL is superb if you have access to a human opponent, but can quickly fall flat if you're playing alone. FD2 will feature a series of mission scenarios which should keep thing interesting during solo play. The combat has moved inland, and you'll now be able to battle over something more interesting than a huge expanse of blue water. More planes will be featured, and they won't all use FD's P-51 instrument panel. This Win 95 sim will allow network play (cooperative and antagonistic) in addition to modem links.

Piston jocks will also be able to check out solo versions of Domark's CONFIRMED KILL and Kesmai's AIR WARRIOR 2; see the sidebar "Going Solo" for details. Finally, Dynamix is said to be planning a Battle of Britain simulation sometime after the release of RED BARON II.

BLADE RUNNERS

Helicopter sims are growing in popularity, and the Apache is as ubiquitous a target for simulation in this genre as the F-16 is over in the fixed-wing arena. The next chopper sim on the block is Interactive Magic and Digital Integration's HIND, the sequel to last year's hit APACHE. See the preview that follows this feature for full details.

HELO THERE

Next up after HIND will be AH-64D LONGBOW, an Apache simulation from EA/Origin's Jane's Combat Simulations line. Designer Andy Hollis says that in addition to the plentitude of Jane's reference material, his team has access to the design documentation and operator manuals for the Longbow Apache—which he finds rather amazing considering the Longbow isn't even in full production yet.

The game can be played in VGA and SVGA, and will offer texture-mapped, rolling terrain. Hollis says the texture-mapped objects are stunningly detailed, and "we put in lots of gratuitous ways to look at this stuff, since you're usually flying over it at high speed or blowing it up." The flight engine is completely new—there's no rehashed STRIKE COMMANDER code here.

Hollis and his team have been consulting with an Apache Training Brigade at Ft. Hood, Texas, and a group of three pilots has been visiting Origin on a regular basis to help with flight modeling. He claims there's a certain realistic buoyancy to the helicopter's movement that he's never experienced in a sim before.

Although the product is slated to come with a manual that's several hundred pages long, you probably won't need it. LONGBOW will feature interactive tutorial missions with an instructor's voice guiding you. Once you're up to speed, you can fly historical mission based on actual Apache missions in Panama and the Persian Gulf, as well as a fictional series of missions in the Ukraine. There's also a non-linear campaign mode. The terrain for all these actions is based on U.S. Geological Service digital elevation map data. The most welcome aspect of the terrain engine is the addition of treelines in addition to the usual valleys and ridges—for once, standard helicopter pop-up attacks will be effective.

Going Solo

Generally, sims are designed first as stand-alone games, and then network and modem play is added as a bonus value, but a few companies are taking their networked sims on solo flights. Interactive Magic and Kesmai are teaming up to create a boxed version of AIR WARRIOR 2. This one promises to offer a lot more standalone playability than the old Konami SVGA AIR WARRIOR, as it will sport a wide variety of offensive and defensive missions. See last month's Simulations column for full details.

Domark plans a standalone release of CONFIRMED KILL a few months after the online version goes live this summer. The company is working with a group that's done military-spec sims on this one, and "exceedingly realistic flight modeling" is promised. Among the promised features are a mission editor, virtual cockpits with a padlock view, 3-D graphics card support, and voice-transmission capability.

There's also a chance we could see a standalone version of ICI's WARBIRDS, the multiplayer sim covered in this month's Simulations column, from Graphic Simulations.

IT'S COMING

Wizardry
GOLD

SIRTECH

Circle Reader Service #163

An add-on disk slated for fall release will add new missions, multiplayer support, a Windows 95-native engine, and hardware support for 3-D graphics.

ROTOR REGISTRATION

Development of a third Apache simulation, simply named AH-64A, is being spearheaded by Domark's Bryan Walker, a former AH-64 pilot who flew in Desert Storm. Walker's experience isn't just going to aid the hardware-accuracy of AH-64A—his team also plans to add a human element. Each pilot will have a set of personality traits that will govern his performance over the course of a deployment—battlefield events and the quality of your leadership will affect crew cohesion. You may even have to shuffle crews around when pilots don't get along, or charm the supply officer into slipping your boys some nonstandard "morale boosters."



ROTOR SCOOTER Information from Jane's and input from a real Apache Training Brigade could make APACHE LONGBOW the most realistic whirly sim yet.

Slated to use the same 64,000-color graphics engine as FLYING NIGHTMARES 2, AH-64A will draw on Walker's experience as an Apache driver to make sure that the flight model, weapons performance, and combat tactics are as accurate as possible. Perhaps most exciting is Domark's new networking code, which should allow connectivity between AH-64A, FLYING NIGHTMARES 2, and (oddly enough) CONFIRMED KILL.

Flying Naked

Civilian sims are set to experience a resurgence late in the year, thanks to a flight sim industry that's had more mergers than the airlines in recent months. Microsoft purchased BAO, the Bruce Artwick Organization responsible for coding FLIGHT SIMULATOR 5.1 and a wide variety of add-ons, in late 1995. Look for the software giant to step up its simulation efforts in coming months.

Meanwhile, Sierra has purchased the flight simulation business of SubLogic, the company that pioneered personal computer flight simulation over 15 years ago. Sierra plans to combine the realism of SubLogic's flight models and aircraft systems with the Dynamix 3Space terrain technology to create a new recreational flying sim that may take on FLIGHT SIMULATOR. Look for five aircraft, including an amphibian and an aerobatic stunt plane.

Looking Glass Technologies will be releasing a Windows 95 version of FLIGHT UNLIMITED, featuring five new airport areas to fly from. An inexpensive upgrade will be available for purchasers of the DOS version. Next up from LGT is a general aviation sim that takes the graphics and flight model detail of FLIGHT UNLIMITED and adds visual and instrument navigation, scenarios, and a combat-game-style mission structure. Reliable sources say that along with the typical general aviation aircraft, LGT plans to sneak a P-51 Mustang into the sim as well.

VERTICAL MARKETING

Also in the works for chopper fans are the aforementioned FLYING NIGHTMARES 2, which will feature the Bell AH-1W SuperCobra, and Dynamix's first helicopter simulation. Bucking the Apache trend, the Dynamix effort will simulate the Eurocopter Tigre, a joint French and German design built for anti-tank and battlefield support operations.

Approach Pattern

Simulation	Producer	Genre	Expected Release *	OS	Network play?	Modem play?	Top Complexity **
1943: European Air War	MicroProse	WW II	Summer	DOS	yes	yes	Advanced
Advanced Tactical Fighters	EA/Jane's	Modern Jet	Second quarter	DOS	yes	maybe	Intermediate
AH-64A	Domark	Helicopter	First quarter 97	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
AH-64D Longbow	Origin/Jane's	Helicopter	Second quarter	DOS	add-on	add-on	Advanced
Air Warrior 2	Interactive Magic	WW II/Korea	Third quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
Back to Baghdad	Military Simulations, Inc.	Modern Jet	Second quarter	DOS	add-on	add-on	Advanced
Confirmed Kill	Domark	WW II/Korea	Third quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
F-16 Fighting Falcon	Interactive Magic	Modern Jet	Third quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
Falcon 4.0	Spectrum Holobyte	Modern Jet	Fourth quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
Fighter Duel 2	Jaeger Software	WW II	Fourth quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
Flying Nightmares 2	Domark	Jet/Helicopter	Fourth quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
Hind	Interactive Magic	Helicopter	Second quarter	DOS	yes	yes	Advanced
JetFighter III	Mission Studios	Modern Jet	Second quarter	DOS	no	no	Intermediate
Red Baron II	Sierra/Dynamix	WW I	Third quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
Silent Thunder: A-10	Sierra/Dynamix	Modern Jet	Imminent	Win 95	no	no	Beginner
Top Gun: Fire At Will	Spectrum Holobyte	Modern Jet	Imminent	DOS	yes	yes	Beginner

* Release dates are often—usually, actually—subject to change

** All of these offer simplified beginner options as well

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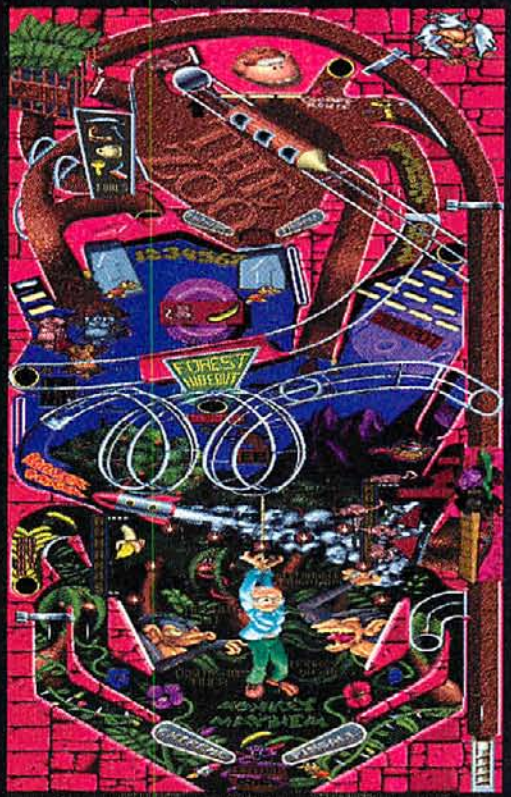
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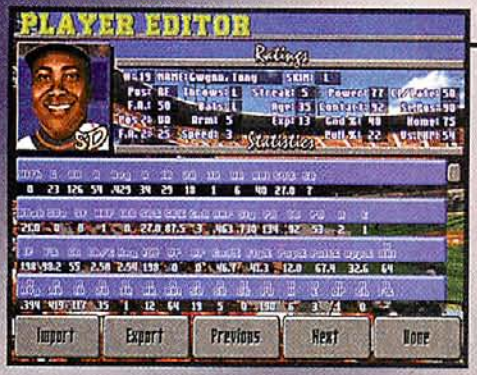
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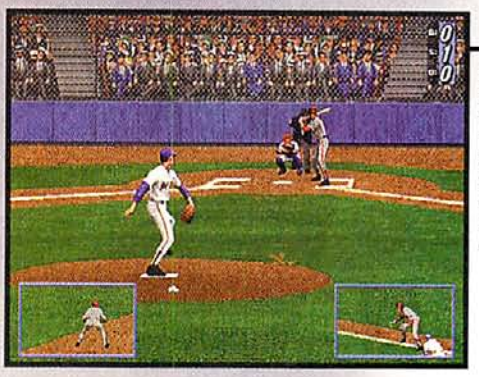
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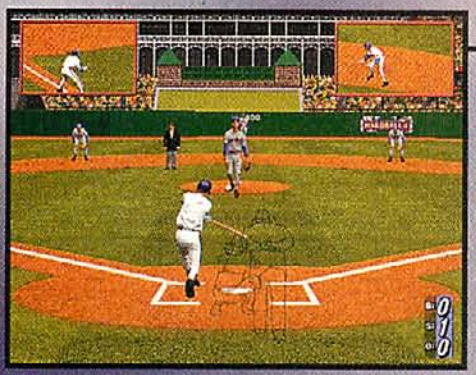
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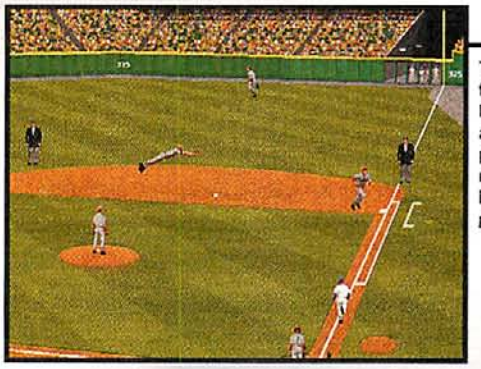
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HIND SIGHT

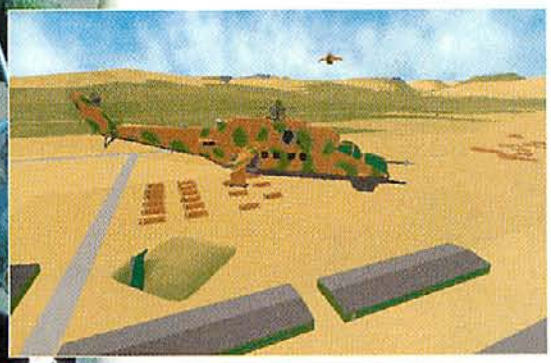
CG SNEAK PREVIEW
GAME STILL IN DEVELOPMENT

Digital Integration And I-Magic Make A Cool Mil

BY DENNY ATKIN

There are faster helicopters, there are more powerful helicopters, and there are certainly stealthier helicopters. But you won't find a meaner looking helicopter than the Mil Mi-24 Hind. This attack helicopter started life as a heavily armed assault troop transport, but ended up serving as the Soviet Union's primary gunship, and was a common sight wherever the Eastern Bloc military projected its power. While the United States' AH-64 Apache relies on a combination of speed, agility, and sophisticated electronics for a battlefield advantage, the Mi-24 Hind holds its own using brute force. Heavy armor and big missiles made it a feared sight in Afghanistan, and throughout the Soviet bloc.

Today, the Hind remains in service in the air forces of around 20 nations, and thanks to the efforts of Digital Integration and Interactive Magic, it will soon be appearing on PC screens as well. HIND is the companies' sequel to last year's successful APACHE helicopter simulation. It's based on the same simulation engine as APACHE, so much of what you'll find here is familiar. However, the Hind's mission and capabilities are different enough to give this simulation a fresh feel.



MIL SPEC The Mil Mi-24 Hind presents an intimidating profile.

BLADE RUNNER

The Hind is a much larger helicopter than the Apache, and isn't nearly as agile. An older design, the helicopter also doesn't have the Apache's auto-stabilization system, so its pilots must deal with control cross-coupling. HIND features three flight models: Arcade, designed to be extremely easy to fly; Realistic, designed to simulate as closely as possible the Hind's real flight characteristics; and Simplified, which is identical to realistic mode but with control cross-coupling removed. Don't let the cross-coupling scare you, though. Although the Hind isn't as easy to fly as the Apache, a flight control system on the real Hind absorbs oscillation in all three axes, stabilizing the aircraft in a level attitude and making it easier to hold course in forward flight and while hovering. The Alpha version I evaluated only had the Arcade flight model active, but given DI's record with sims like APACHE and TORNADO, HIND's realistic model shouldn't disappoint.

The Hind's 12.7mm four-barreled Gatling-type cannon fires 4,000 to 5,000 rounds per minute, but doesn't pack as much punch as the 30mm cannon on the Apache. It has plenty of power for air-to-air use or against lightly armored ground targets, but for main battle tanks you'll need to rely on pylon-mounted missiles. No problem there, though. With rails for four AT-6 Spiral anti-tank missiles, along with four pylons capable of carrying more anti-tank missiles, 80mm rocket pods, grenade launchers, napalm bombs, and even mine-laying equipment, the Hind is anything but under-armed.

The Hind's avionics suite isn't as sophisticated as the Apache's, but it does have a HUD, low-light-level TV displays, laser designator, and a threat-warning system called the Natasha Device that analyzes an approaching missile's signature and warns the crew of the missile type, bearing, and range using an audible female voice.

COMBAT ROCK

HIND's menu structure will be familiar to any APACHE flyer. Quickstart is an arcade-style scenario which drops you right into the heart of a battle, complete with a missile locked on target. This mode features a simplified, arcade-style flight model, as well as a scoring mechanism



ON THE CHOPPER BLOCK A South Korean tank gets tanked by a Spiral missile.

and a top-10 vanity board. If you've had a really bad day and you just want to blast things, Quickstart Invincible sets you up in a similar situation, but with unlimited fuel and weaponry, and none of that annoying ground fire. Once you get a basic feel for chopper combat in the arcade mode, Training mode will show you how you're *supposed* to fly the thing.

Once you get the hang of things, you can fly a series of single missions, or take a shot at the campaign. Although the campaign missions are pre-scripted, the mission sequence depends on your performance. Botch a mission and you get dropped a skill level; excel and you'll move up. Unless your piloting is robotically consistent, you'll be able to play the campaigns a number of times before the missions repeat.

Because the Hind can carry many things the Apache can't—including bombs and troops—you'll find a wider variety of missions here. You may be tasked with crossing enemy lines and dropping troops into a hot spot, or you migh be sent on Medivac missions. Anti-ship and anti-sub missions should surface in this sim, as well as traditional escort, recon, point-attack, and search-and-destroy missions.

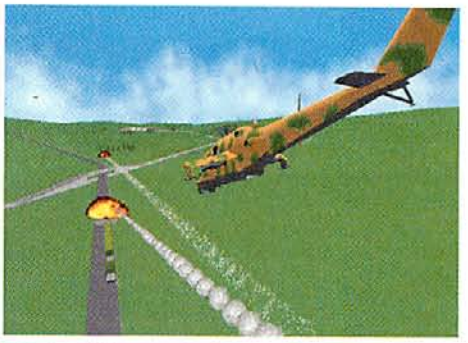
The action takes place in three locales. You'll fly against the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, taking on well-armed guerrilla troops as well as Pakistani Air Force F-16s. The Korean theater puts you in the middle of a North Korean incursion into South Korea in a raid to alleviate a chronic food shortage. Securing food supplies is a unique goal for a flight sim; despite your humanitarian intentions, a well-armed force that includes Apache Longbows will try to send you packing for home. Finally, the Kazakhstan scenario pits you against a rebellious breakaway republic using mostly ex-Soviet technology—including Hinds.

ROTOR CLUB

According to DI, the network play quirks encountered in APACHE have been worked out, and HIND should comfortably support up to 16 players. There are also a number of two-player missions, playable using network, serial, or modem connections. Combat pits the players against each other; Pilot/Gunner mode puts one pilot at the flight controls and the second in the gunner position; and Leader/Wingman is a cooperative mode where two Hinds fly together. The Korean theater is shared with APACHE, and the two sims can be tied together for head-to-head or network play.

While network play has been fine-tuned, the SVGA graphics engine is essentially the same as found in Apache. The Gouraud-shaded polygon graphics look really nice; while the lack of texture-mapping means you don't get the "you are there" feeling you get in EF2000, the realistic palette and smoothing effects give a much less computerish effect than SU-27 FLANKER. Thankfully, it appears that DI is modeling the Russian-style instruments realistically, but rendering the displays with English characters instead of Cyrillic (at least, in the preliminary version I flew).

The terrain looks good, but suffers from one major flaw that also plagued APACHE: there are only a few scattered trees. This means you can't pop up from behind foliage to execute your attacks. (You can, however, use buildings and hills for pop-up attacks.)



DEATH ON RAILS A train meets an unfortunate end during a supply interdiction mission.

There was no sound in the Alpha version, but DI says the all-digital sound will include English speech read by someone with a Russian accent to add atmosphere.

At first glance, HIND looks very much like a slight modification of APACHE. But with the differences in mission profiles and helicopter handling, it's a new personality hiding behind that familiar face.

Mil mi-24 Hind

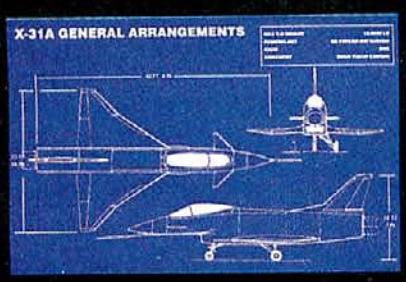
The Mi-24, NATO code-named Hind, was designed in the early 1970s as a heavily armed assault transport for a squad of ground troops. Although current designs are used as offensive gunships, all Hind models retain the troop transport capability. The troop-carrying capabilities necessitate a wide silhouette that's uncharacteristic of a gunship, but heavy armor, IR jammers, exhaust suppressers, and flare dispensers aid combat effectiveness.

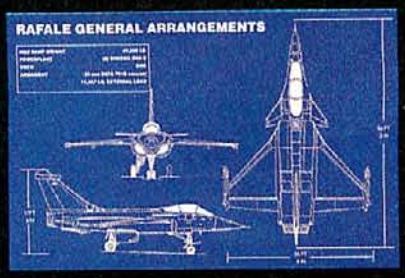
Along with the usual air-to-ground ordinance, the Hind-E (Mi-24W) model added the capability to carry AA-8 Aphid air-to-air missiles. In the Iran-Iraq war, an Iranian F-4 Phantom fell victim to a Hind, but the Hind used a Spiral anti-tank missile to down the jet.

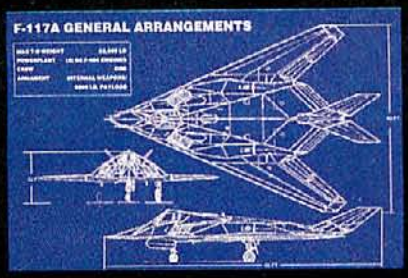
The oddest variant is perhaps the Hind-G, first identified in operation at Chernobyl. Instead of wingtip weapon pylons, it sports "clutching hand" mechanisms on lengthened pylons. It's believed that this model is designed for NBC (nuclear/biological/chemical) warfare.

- Crew 2
- Passengers . . . . . 8, or 4 stretchers
- Weapons payload . 5,290 lb
- Length . . . . . 57 ft 5 in
- Height . . . . . 21 ft 4 in
- Rotor diameter . . . 56 ft 9 in
- Maximum speed . . . 199 mph
- Hovering ceiling . . 7,200 feet
- Combat radius* . . . 99 miles

**Maximum load, no external tanks. All data based on Mi-24P.*



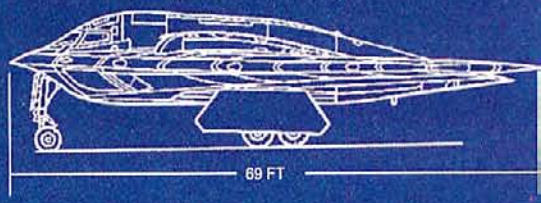


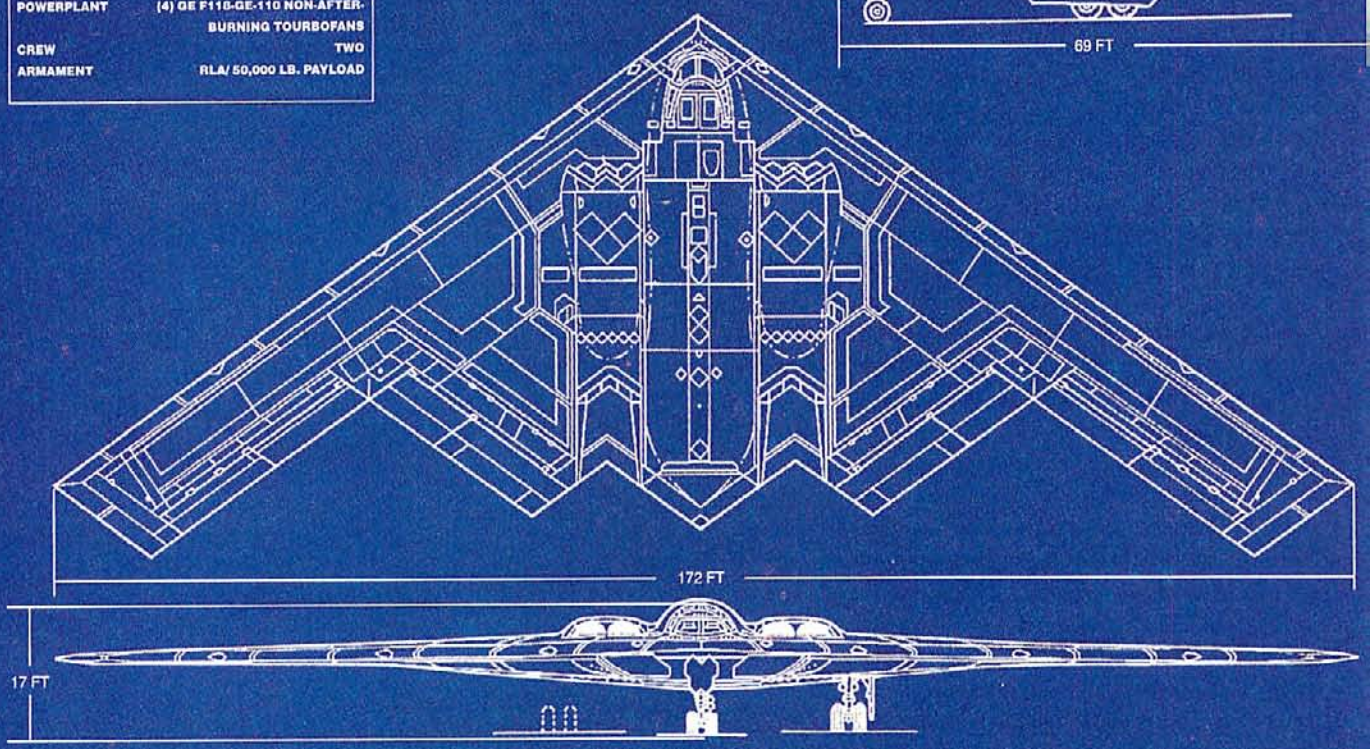


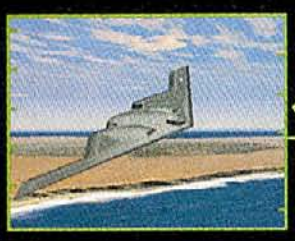
THEY'RE BEING BUILT TO DESTROY COUNTRIES THAT DON'T EVEN EXIST YET.

B-2A GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS

MAX T-O WEIGHT	376,000 LB
POWERPLANT	(4) GE F118-GE-110 NON-AFTER-BURNING TOURBOFANS
CREW	TWO
ARMAMENT	RLA/ 50,000 LB. PAYLOAD







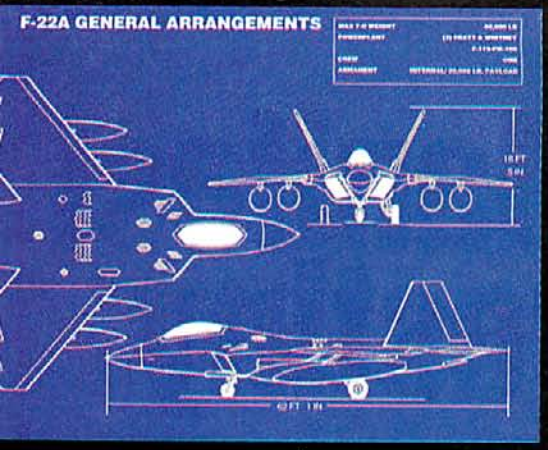
IF NOT BEING DETECTED IS YOUR THING, CLIMB ABOARD THE B-2 STEALTH BOMBER. IT TOOK AN ARMY OF ENGINEERS TO MAKE YOU INVISIBLE TO ENEMY RADAR. AND WE GOT ALL THE SPECS.



ADVANCED 3D GRAPHICS AND DIGITIZED SPECIAL EFFECTS ADD TO THE REALISM. ALSO MULTIPLE STATES OF DAMAGE (WATCH YOUR TARGET EXPLODE INTO BITS) AND DIGITIZED EXPLOSIONS.



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This simulation is based on exclusive, authentic and up-to-date information from Jane's Information Group (the world's largest publisher of military information). It includes a fully interactive JANE'S All The World's Aircraft Guide with blue prints, weapons information, engine diagrams, and cockpit layouts. You can even pull up video footage of the actual fighters in test programs pulling the same maneuvers you pull in the game.



Be the first civilian to experience air combat in the advanced tactical fighters of the early 21st Century in this sequel to US Navy Fighters (the standard for simulations in 1995). Fly aircraft that are just starting Pentagon test programs.

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3.2 G 3 245 N 63 12 21 E

THR 100%



This is your opportunity to experience U.S. tactical and technology trends. Like the X-31's post stall maneuvers and high angles of attack. In scaleable resolution modes for maximum performance on multiple processor speeds (320 x 200 all the way to 1024 x 768).

ROUTE

645



Modem and network play lets up to 8 players dogfight in authentically detailed F-22's. Supercruise through fully texture mapped terrain ranging from deserts to islands to cities.



3 all-new Air Power Campaigns of the future with different and unique threat environments. The kind that require the extreme bombing accuracy of the F-117A to take out hard targets. Just beware the air defenses of the new enemy forces.

M E7

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Manifest Destiny

Building New Civilizations Online With Sid Meier's CivNet

by Terry Coleman

On the surface, what could go wrong? One of the greatest games ever designed for the computer, Civilization, gets a facelift: new interface, better AI, SVGA graphics and finally, multiplayer human play. More than anything, when I play CivNet, I am reminded of another MicroProse masterpiece. Not Sid Meier's Civilization, so much as Master of Magic. This is not to say that CivNet crashes all the time, or that the design is unfinished, as with MOM, but rather, that CivNet lacks that final bit of polish so essential to a truly finished, professional product.

Oddly enough, the game plays remarkably well—solitaire. The computer opponents are improved, the bevy of advisors—military, science, and so on—actually give reasonable advice on how to discover the mysterious secrets of plastics, create steel for those huge battleships, and so forth. When the action gets too frantic, you can actually turn city management over to the computer (with some restrictions) and concentrate on the Big Picture instead of just micro-managing your CivHeart out.

But no one buys a game like CivNet to play only against the computer, regardless of how much better that computer opponent might be than in the original game. And for many, the thrill of competing against other human CivMeisters is somewhat diminished when they find that the hotseat option reveals all of the other Human Civilizations at any time! Then again, the infestation doesn't stop there. TCP/IP works fine for Internet and Network play—once you have the inevitable MicroProse patch—but IPX and NetBios seem doomed to failure (we had numerous crashes in every IPX-based session we attempted). Why? Obviously, most gamers will play through TCP/IP over the Net, but if the main reason for this game is multiplayer human play, how could MicroProse not wait until these net play bugs in particular were ironed out?

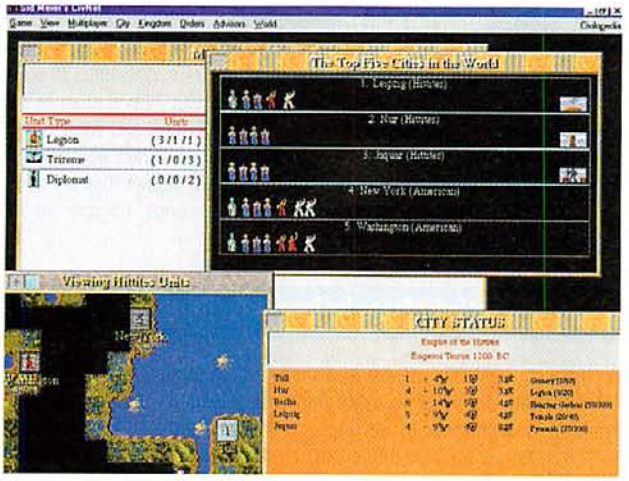
THE PLAY'S THE THING

If, however, you are able to get your multiplayer game up and running, the game is still Sid Meier's Civilization, in all its glory. Despite some who may dislike the newer interface (see Johnny Wilson's comments), it functions quite well from either keyboard or mouse input,



Price: $59.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486 or better, Windows 3.1 or Win 95, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 2 x CD-ROM, 18 MB hard drive space, mouse. Supports Windows-compatible sound cards.
of Players: 1-7, with network, hotseat and Internet play
Protection: None (one CD required per player)
Designer: Mark Denman
Original Design: Sid Meier
Publisher: MicroProse Software
Hunt Valley, MD
(410) 771-0440
Reader Service: 321

and having multiple windows of reports all immediately accessible helps keep the sheer amount of information from becoming overwhelming. The depth of strategy—balancing world exploration, trade, economics, constructing Wonders of the World, fighting wars, all while keeping your citizens content—is enhanced by having to play against much craftier humans. And the thrill of building, say, the Great Wall right out from under one of your adversaries is very nearly worth the price of the game all by itself.



WINDOWS TO THE WORLD Having several charts and maps open at once can make it easier to manage forces and production in CivNet.

Even so, as much fun as all this can potentially generate for would-be world conquerors, it falls short of the all-time classic status of its storied progenitor. For example, game balance in the original Civ was due to infamous "cheats" that helped the computer stay in the game against a human with, quite simply, more brainpower. Since human leaders should theoretically be on a more even footing, they don't get the cheats that would help keep them in the game. Thus, certain advances in the game—most notably the Pyramids—give humans who secure such technology advantages they rarely lose. It's disheartening to play a game for 10 hours when you have virtually no chance to come from behind and win.

And there is the small matter that, unlike other popular multiplayer online games such as WARCRAFT II, a full game of CIVNET (even playing at "blitz" speed) can take upwards of 25 hours to complete. In fairness, CIVNET has a lot more scope than these other strategy games, but this is still a game that must be played over a number of sessions to be finished. In that sense, it's the Monopoly of the '90s, as you tend to give the victory to whomever has the most hotels—er, Wonders of the World—at the end of a long session of play. Initially, MicroProse was planning to do scenarios that could be completed in an (admittedly long) evening. Guess

Building A Better World For Democracy

After founding Washington in 4000 B.C., the Americans, led by the noble (but tough) Jorge of Jones, built their first militia unit. Never a country to sit back in a defensive posture, our newly-formed military force was immediately sent forth into the wilderness. By the time the second militia unit had been built, the first troop had discovered a few ancient tribes and gained the knowledge these wise people had developed.

But soon afterwards, tragedy struck. A barbarian settlement was accidentally disturbed, and refused our offer of friendship. Like a swarm of bees, the uncouth hordes swept over our first military unit and eliminated it. Angered, our proud militia took revenge on the heathens, as we quickly trained more troops due to the emergency.

Later, our newly-invented cavalry scouting unit chanced upon the Egyptians. Knowing a weak civilization when they saw it, they quickly took Thebes for the glory of our great civilization. Soon afterwards, the puny Greek civilization was steamrolled. "Nothing", proclaimed Jorge of Jones, "will halt our expansion. We will not rest until America rules the world, so that all people may be safe and free."

By 1 A.D. the Americans had well over 700,000 citizens, 4 thriving cities and, in classic American style, no money. But nothing would stop them, except the Managing Editor. Or a crash.—*George Jones*

My Return To Civilization

The Luddites *modus operandi* was to found a city, build one military unit, and convert to building settlers in order to expand as soon as possible. I was gambling that I was far apart from the other civilizations at this point and, early in the game, things looked positive. I established Wasteland atop a Forest square and next to a body of water where I had a Fish resource. I built one militia unit and sent him scouting while I built my first additional settlers. Unfortunately, two turns away from the completion of the settler unit, a potential enemy appeared. I immediately bought a Phalanx unit and chased the Chinese aggressor out of sacred Luddite territory. We were able to establish an alliance, but on two separate occasions, he forced me to convert from settler development to purchase a military unit.

I don't like the Mac-like interface. Indeed, it cost me severely when a trireme full of military units ended up the turn in a sea square that was non-adjacent to a coastal shore. On such an occasion, the ship and all aboard are lost. Then, before I could recover from my interface problem, Denny the Yellow Scourge moved in behind me and destroyed my city (yes, one city—my original plan went by the wayside when I kept having to convert settlers to military units to stave off his incursions).

Re-entering the game as a new civilization, I inadvertantly wiped out George's civilization. CIVNET doesn't feature any error-trapping for new entries into the game so if the new player accidentally chooses a color that is already in play, it can wipe out the other player. However, once we figured out what was wrong and re-started, my position was still untenable. I started anew with a basic city, waited five turns for a militia unit and was immediately destroyed by, you guessed it, Denny the Yellow Peril. Maybe I need to write a new book—*Sid Meier's Civilization or The Peril of the East.*—*Johnny Wilson*

Peaceful Majesty

The Hittites began calmly enough, until they ran into the surly German empire. Although warfare is distasteful to our peace-loving society, we were forced to rid the world of the militaristic menace. Afterwards, we secured our borders and began forging cities to last the milennia (three of the top five cities were Hittite), filled with the Lighthouse of Leipzig, The Gardens of Ur, The Oracle of Nom, and other great works which were nearing completion. Oddly enough, the human-controlled barbarians posed the greatest threat to our Empire. When we met the Chinese, we attempted to trade with them, and established a small settlement (not realizing that they considered this their sole continent). Rather than communicate with us, the savages annihilated our settlement, and had the gall to accuse us—the beneficent Hittites!—of enchroaching upon their lands. For now, we will make peace...until the citizens of our land are no longer so forgiving. (Do I feel a new government coming on?)—*Terry Coleman*

The Reign Of The Great Ruler Denny Tse Tung Of The Chinese

The isolation of the Chinese people ended in the year 3480 BC, when one of our scouting armies met with an odd race that called themselves the Luddites. Initial contact seemed beneficial for both our peoples, as we traded knowledge of our ceremonial burial practices for instruction in horseback riding. Indeed, the trade did benefit both of our peoples, as once our mounted armies invaded their city, they would have many dead to bury. The Luddite city, Wasteland, was unfortunately placed on a thin stretch of land that our armies needed to cross in order to expand our empire and make room for our growing nation. The Luddites grew nervous about our alliance, but I assured them that our armies were simply passing by.

As I sailed with my Triremes, however, I ran across the Luddites, sailing to the west. Could they have loaded their armies on the ship, leaving their city defenses weak? I massed my armies to the north, invading Wasteland. Success! It was beyond my dreams—the Luddites had left their city completely undefended! The continent was mine, and I was free to expand. All was uneventful until the year 1260, when our people encountered the Americans. I'd heard of their power, so I decided that an alliance with them, against the Hittites, would be the wisest course of action. For now, at least. But once my people build the empire a bit more....—*Denny Atkin*

10 Steps To A More Stable Civilization

1. **If you are new to Civ**, play solo until you can give the computer a good fight at Warlord level. If Human-controlled Civilizations are so crafty that they leave your inexperienced Civ too far behind in the first hour of play, the remainder of the game isn't much fun.
2. **Forget hot-seat play.** For parties, YOU DON'T KNOW JACK is a lot more fun, with less hassle.
3. **Set your net game up with TCP/IP** rather than IPX or NetBIOS for greater stability.
4. **Even if** you think you have WinG drivers installed already (whether Win 3.1 or Win 95) don't take a chance. Go through the entire Setup for CivNet when you first install the game; it's worth the extra time to make sure your drivers are compatible with those that MicroProse requires.
5. **Need some tactical tips?** I could recommend a certain strategy guide by two CGW editors (*Civilization, Or Rome On 640K A Day*, by Johnny Wilson and Alan Emrich, Prima Publishing), but that would be a shameless plug.
6. **Sequential play** is still the best way to learn the game when playing solo. Turn-based play is in all gamers' DNA (even if they don't want to admit it).
7. **Parallel turns are the only way to go** for network/internet play. I *hate* waiting for people to move when my clock is running on the Internet. With parallel turns, if I finish before my adversaries/friends, I can better tweak my cities, without twiddling my thumbs.
8. **Allowing two minutes per turn** results in focused, lively play. The howls (and messages) from inveterate micro-managers when the turn ends too soon are half the fun of the game. If it gets too frantic, let the computer run some of your less important cities on autopilot while you catch your breath.
9. **Play at Prince level.** While King level sounds tempting for macho CivNuts, they will soon lament the additional Barbarians, which are such a nuisance as to slow play considerably. Having four content citizens per city, rather than three, makes it much easier to increase your empire's size. This means finding other Human Civs earlier.
10. **No human gets the Pyramids.** Any CivLeader in our group who breaks this meets a most untimely demise (as soon as we find his/her Civilization), simply because the advantage of switching governments effortlessly is too great early in the game for other Human Civs to overcome.



I'M AMERICAN & I'M OK But if George sleeps all night while Denny works all day, he may find that even his strong Civ can fall prey to the hungry Chinese.

those were lost in the shuffle to get the game released by a certain date.

CITIZENS IN UNREST

If you long for an updated version of CIV, or if you never played the original, and want to see what the fuss is about, CIVNET is actually worth the frustration. But don't kid yourself: until you get the patch and figure out the network quirks, you'll probably be playing CIVNET more against the computer civilizations than versus those of your friends. With SID MEIER'S CIV2000 due this summer, you have to wonder if the hassles are worth it.

APPEAL: Anyone who enjoys a deep, fulfilling strategy game, and who can deal with the bugs and hassles of setting up a network/Internet game. (Get the patch.)

PROS: A much-needed upgrade to one of the great strategy games of all time. The one complaint of Civ players—no human opponents—is now finally taken care of. Sort of.

CONS: Poor IPX and NetBios support, crashes constantly without the patch.

CG RATED

THE 11TH HOUR
{the five stages.}

1
Shock.
You finally figure out The 7th Guest™, only to hear that its sequel, The 11th Hour is going to be released.

2
Disbelief.
This can't be true! You read the articles, memorize the reviews, & talk incessantly about The 11th Hour. Friends shun you.

3
Resentment.
They said it would be out, and you believed them. Where is it?! Why would they lie to you?!!

4
Acceptance.
It's out!!! Finally! It's everything they said it would be & more. Now, if you could just figure out what is behind the....

5
Death.

MATURE M AGES 17+

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You can stop grieving now. The 11th Hour has finally arrived. This PC CD-ROM game fuses incredible 3-D graphics and mind-numbing challenges



with a full-length psychological thriller. It's also 12 times bigger and two CDs longer than its predecessor, The 7th Guest. So, is The 11th Hour really worth the wait? Well, we think it's totally killer.

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INTERACTIVE MAGIC PRESENTS

STAR RANGERS

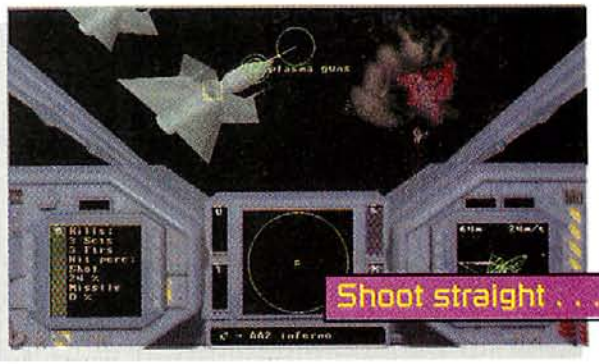
You've Got Just Enough Time To Save The Galaxy . . . If You Play Smart!

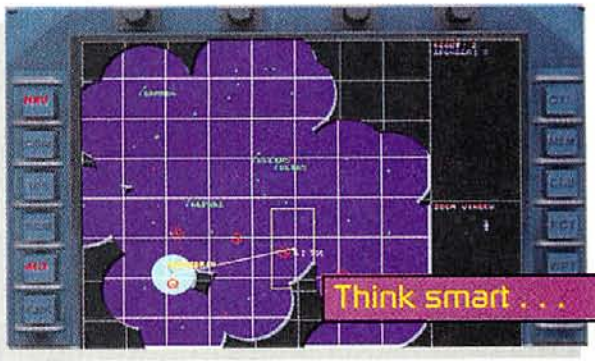
- *"Star Rangers' blend of strategy and arcade action will have you on the edge of your seat from start to finish."*
  -PC Gamer

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- **Rating: 89%** **-Computer Game Review**









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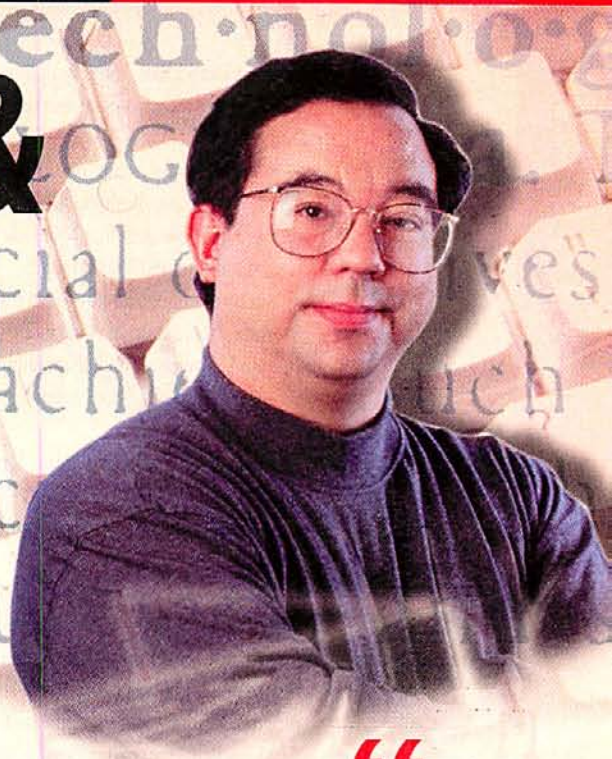
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Circle Reader Service #105

When Plug & Play Isn't So Simple



DOS Games Will Bring A Plug & Play Device To Its Knees

Several issues ago, I confronted some of the problems I had with setting up a new Pentium system with a plug-and-play BIOS. Since then, I've wrestled with several plug-and-play systems and have learned more than I ever thought necessary. After all, the very moniker "plug-and-play" should mean that I don't have to know anything about my system, right? Just put the card in and go, right? Sure.

A big part of the problem is the PC architecture itself, which has 16 hardware interrupts, only a handful of which are available to peripheral cards. A hardware interrupt, or IRQ, is a circuit that, when activated, "interrupts" the computer to tell it about some urgent business—when you press a key on the keyboard, for example.

Another annoyance is that some older games are limited to certain IRQs for audio features. For example, a number of games assume that your sound card will be at IRQ 9 or lower. The laziness of game programmers is partly to blame, but that laziness is reinforced by the de facto SOUND BLASTER standard, which normally uses either IRQ 5 or IRQ 7 (with IRQ 9 relegated to MIDI music synthesis). This caused great headaches for cards such as the GRAVIS ULTRASOUND series, which would default to IRQ 11.

> "Plug & Play only works with Win 95 or some other PnP-capable operating system and only with Windows apps."

THIS IS PROGRESS?

Okay, so along come plug-and-play (PnP) cards for the PC. No switches to set, no IRQs to remember; these cards are self-configuring. End of problem! Er, not quite. Picture this:

You rip open the box for the new PnP AWE-32 card from CREATIVE LABS. You know this card has wide support from the game industry, and in a pinch, you can always use it as a stock SOUND BLASTER card. When you boot into Windows 95, the card configures itself, and you have sweet-sounding audio from Windows. You are one happy camper.

You pull down a DOS game CD, boot to the DOS prompt, pop in the CD and run the game. Uh-oh. No sound. Well, you did just install a new sound card. You run the game's setup utility. The sound

LAB NOTES

▶Sometime this spring, Creative Labs will be shipping the PCI version of the 3D BLASTER (see review on page 80). However, the PCI version will use a different chip, the Rendition Verité chip. The Verité is likely to be a hot prospect; the boys at id (the DOOM dudes) have picked the Verité as the first supported accelerator for their upcoming new release, QUAKE. Number Nine will also be shipping a Verité-based board.

The folks at Hercules will also be delivering 3-D gear soon, but their card will be based on S3's new Virge chip. It's looking like the 3-D market will be heating up by midsummer.

▶Also on the radar screen, there's a new specification for CD-ROM discs and drives called DVD (Digitally Versatile Disc). And despite the dopey name, DVD has backing from large CD-ROM drive players like Sony and NEC, and will greatly increase disc capacity and throughput. Storage capacity can range from 4.7 to 17 GB, and throughput is being initially rated at around 1.4 MB/sec. DVD will be compatible with all current CD-ROM formats (data and audio), and drives supporting the larger capacities will read lower capacity discs as well.

card autodetect fails. You manually set every IRQ you can think of, but still no sound.

Scratching your head, you start up Windows 95 again, bring up the device manager and discover that your new PnP audio card is set to IRQ 15. Huh?

You try to change it, only to get the message: "this parameter cannot be changed." You contemplate grabbing a shotgun and ending your computer's life on the spot.

This actually happened to me. During the process of getting the PnP AWE-32 to work, I uncovered a number of interesting facts:

First, if you have a PnP BIOS in your computer—most newer PCI motherboards, 486 and Pentiums, do—then you need to root around in your BIOS setup program. Usually, and I emphasize the word "usually," you can uncover a section of the BIOS setup program that allows you to manually configure which IRQs are allotted to PnP and which you can still manually control. If you're clever about it, you can assign only interrupts which are accessible by all games to PnP. Piece of cake, right?

Okay, now what happens when you have *two* or even *three* PnP cards?

Some BIOSes allow you to allocate specific IRQs to specific slots. Then you can count the slots and plug the PnP card into the right slot. Of course, there are some BIOSes that give you little or no manual control over the IRQ.

ICU WILL SEE YOU THROUGH

Hey, I thought this was supposed to be easier, I hear you cry. Actually, it is, as long as you remain in Windows 95 or some other PnP-aware operating system and only run Windows applications. The hitches are those pesky older DOS games that we all love to play.

There is a solution, however. It's called the "ISA configuration utility" or ICU for short.

> **"Hey, I thought this was supposed to be easier, I hear you cry... The hitches are those pesky older DOS games that we all love to play."**

Those of you have used systems with EISA (extended ISA) architecture systems will immediately recognize the ICU. It's a program that you run that allows you to manually configure your system. You can assign resources to individual slots and cards, tell the system what's in each slot, and so on. These programs are usually easier to use than the more arcane setup programs that configure BIOS settings. There is a minor catch: you have to load a device driver in order to use these manually assigned PnP settings. The good news is that the driver only takes up 2 KB of RAM.

It works pretty well, too. The Gateway P133XL system we looked at in the January issue came bundled with a PnP Ensoniq SOUNDSCAPE card. The P133XL came with the device driver installed in the Windows 95 boot setup, so when we went to the DOS prompt, we had no problems running DOS games, especially those games that directly supported the SOUNDSCAPE board.

The ICU is the only solution, by the way, for those older computers which do not have a PnP BIOS. You can obtain Intel's ICU on their BBS at (503) 264-7999.

For added flexibility, some card makers allow you to disable PnP and retain manual control of the card settings from the beginning. Two interesting examples are the U.S. Robotics SPORTSTER 28.8 KB PnP modem and the 3COM 3C509B network card. The SPORTSTER modem actually has a jumper that enables or disables PnP (PnP is enabled by default.) The 3C509B ethernet card has a software installation program that lets you enable or disable PnP.

TOMORROW AND TOMORROW...

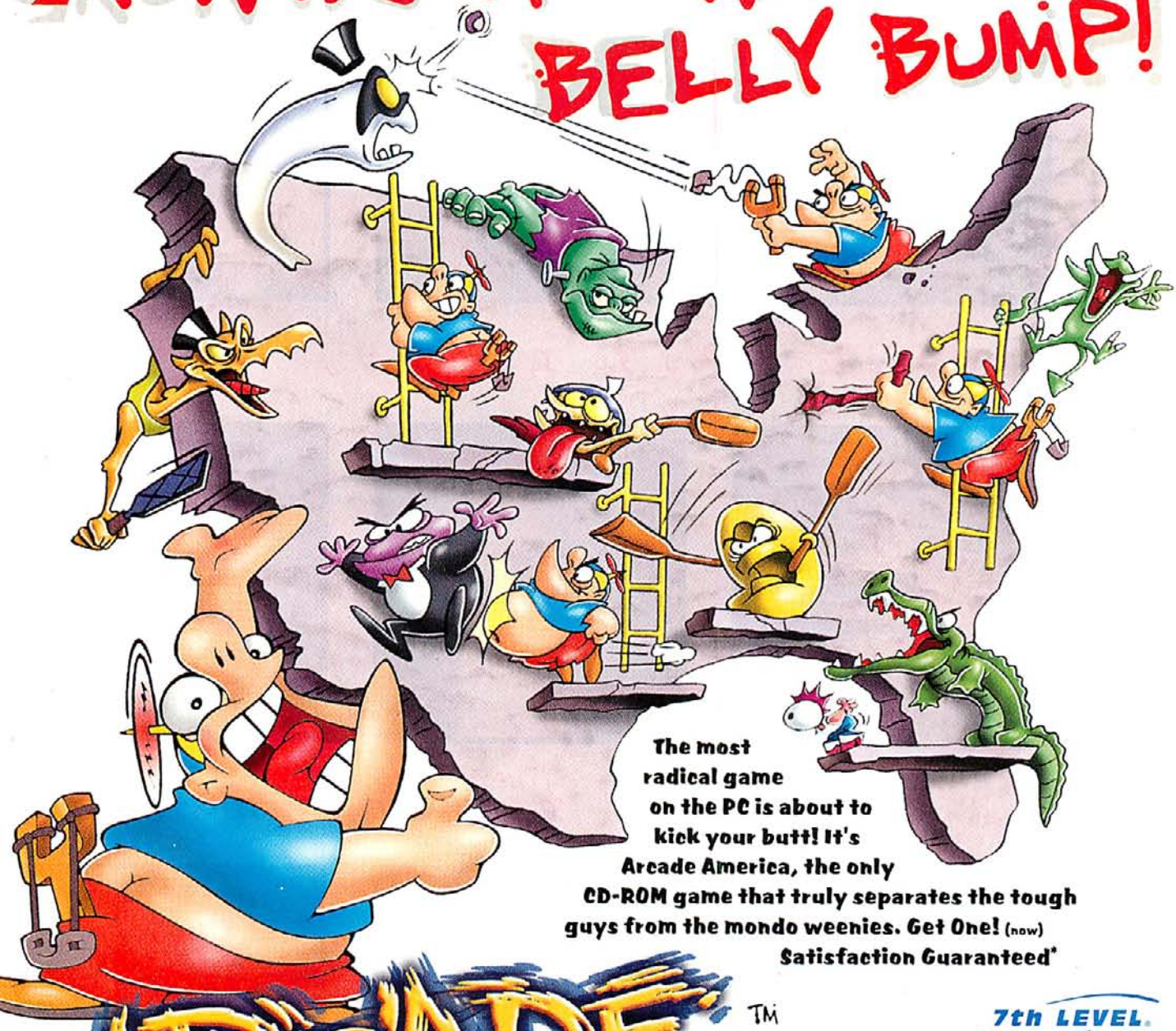
Eventually, software will catch up with the new hardware. Eventually, we'll all be running Windows 95 on our Pentium Pro Plus 900 MHz systems in dazzling, high-resolution true color with Dolby THX quality sound. Eventually.

Until all the software catches up, however, it's wise to arm yourself with a little knowledge, so that when you try to run the original version of Doom on your pure PnP system, you can get it to work, out of the box. Now *that's* plug-and-play.

CG TIPS!

If you've recently installed Windows 95, and it's behaving poorly—such as a low refresh rate and slow graphics performance—it's likely that Windows 95 only installed the 16-bit version of the graphics driver for your card. To install the 32-bit virtual device driver (known as a VxD), insert your Windows 95 CD. Then go to your desktop, click the right mouse button and bring up the display properties window. Click on the settings tab, press the "Change" button under "Display Type" and then click on have disk. Now browse the directory on the CD named "drivers." Under drivers is another folder, "display." Find your vendor name and see if the driver will load. (Note: the Matrox drivers are for the older MGA line, not the Millenium.) If the driver doesn't load, or you don't see your board's driver on the Win95 install CD, visit your vendor's BBS or Web page to see if they have an updated driver available. I'll be talking more in a future column about getting the right graphics driver to max out your Windows 95 performance. —*L. Case*

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Circle Reader Service #34

Stick It In Your Ear

If You're Still Using Those Featherweight Freebies That Came With Your Computer, You Should Hear What You've Been Missing

By Ron Talbot

I still remember the first time I experienced sound while playing a computer game. I had been steadfastly refusing to add a sound card to my then-hulking 386-20. It was primarily a game rig and I was feeling guilty about the amount of money I was spending on it. I was a hard-core RPG gamer at the time and I viewed sound as an expensive luxury. A friend had to practically tie me in a chair to force me to listen to that first Ad Lib card. By dawn the next morning I was hooked.

Games like RED BARON, WING COMMANDER and even the SSI gold box games come alive with the simple addition of audio. Once you can both see and hear the action in a game, it becomes ever so easy to completely lose yourself in it. That wonderful state of total absorption, the doldrums of reality forgotten, lures us back over and over again.

Good sound adds enormously to the overall enjoyment of any game. Why spend thousands of dollars on a fast processor, tons of memory, and a monitor fit for a football stadium, only to add $20 tin can speakers as an afterthought? A good game rig is a pretty hefty investment, but a good set of speakers might well be the key ingredient to enriching your gaming pleasure. In this survey, we'll take a look at six speaker systems currently on the market, and I'll give you some pointers on how to choose a system that's right for you.



Why Can't I Use My Stereo System?

You might be asking yourself just how do these speaker systems stand up to your typical home stereo system. Why can't I just run a cable to my amp and save myself a fistful of dollars? Good question. Actually, this is how I have functioned for the past six years. I have an average quality amp and pretty good speakers. As I evaluated the featured units, I also evaluated my stereo system, and it did very well in all areas except depth, owing to a lack of surround technology. The table in this article shows how it fared relative to these other systems. Basically, if you have a reasonable or better stereo system close to your computer you might as well use it unless you want to harness some of the newer "3-D" technologies. But if you've decided that you want a dedicated audio system for your gaming machine, then figure out first how much you're willing to pay for good gaming audio, check out the reviews below, and use the guidelines to also evaluate the wide range of multimedia speakers out there.

THE GAME'S THE THING!

I'm not an audiophile, I'm a gamer. So rather than delve into a ton of techno-minutiae about frequency response and harmonic distortion, I'm going to focus on how these systems sounded cranking out some gaming audio. To that end, I listened to each of these speaker systems while playing MECHWARRIOR 2 and WING COMMANDER III. My game rig has a SoundBlaster 16 with an Audiowave Dreamwave MIDI daughterboard. To round out my evaluation, I also listened to them playing CD-audio-based vocal and instrumental music tracks to see how they fared.

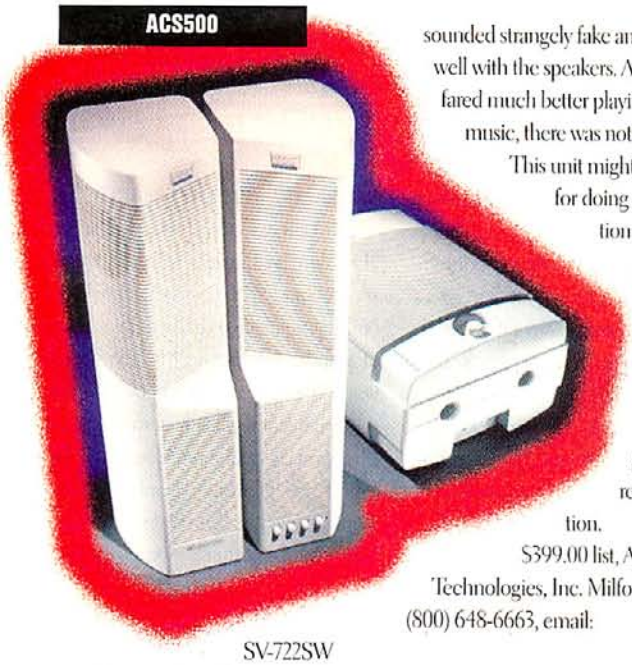
TWO FROGS AND A SIX-PACK

AEROSPACE SPEAKERS AND SUB-WOOFER

They're cute, they should be green, and they hiss like a snake. This system consists of two small streamlined speakers hooked in-line to a sub-woofer. The speakers are controlled by a cable remote for both power and volume. The sub-woofer has power and volume controls mounted on the front panel as well as an overall volume control for the entire system. The speakers connect with a hard-wired cable, making replacement and positioning difficult. Since these two products are bought separately, you are burdened with *two* power bricks, those large, heavy power supplies that irritatingly cover two or more outlets.

The Aerospace system provides reasonable quality gaming sound, with especially high marks for the beefy sub-woofer. The

ACS500



SV-722SW gave an almost perfect blend of strong Mech stomping bass without being obviously distracting. This would be a good low-cost option if it weren't for the hiss. The speakers, while providing reasonable sound generate noticeable hiss that could be heard over the noise of my hard drives. This hiss, usually generated by the unit's power amplifier, is a pretty common problem that can be extremely distracting.

$129.95 list, Interact Accessories, Hunt Valley, MD, (410) 785-5661, www.interact-acc.com

THE TWIN TOWERS

ALTEC-LANSING ACS500 WITH DOLBY PRO-LOGIC

This impressive-looking unit consists of two elegant 18-inch tall, 3-way speaker towers complemented by your standard under-the-desk sub-woofer. It features a Dolby Pro-Logic decoder, and has separate controls for the speakers and the sub-woofer, with one very irritating feature: the power buttons are both very small and hidden on the back of these units in hard-to-reach locations. Cabling is sound and the overall craftsmanship is excellent.

Between Altec's reputation and the Pro-Logic, I was expecting to be blown away, but was surprisingly disappointed. The sub-woofer was particularly weak, and at typical game volume levels it sounded strangely fake and didn't blend well with the speakers. And while it fared much better playing traditional music, there was noticeable hiss.

This unit might be a better fit for doing audio production work, but given its steep price, and the review's focus on gaming audio, I can't give it a strong recommendation.

$399.00 list, Altec-Lansing Technologies, Inc. Milford, PA, (800) 648-6663, email: 75361.351@CompuServe.com

IN DEFIANCE OF PHYSICS!

CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS

A collection of seeming contradictions, the SoundWorks consists of your standard L/R speaker plus sub-woofer configuration. The speakers are amazingly small 3.5-inch cubes. The only other speakers I have seen this small were for sale for $10 at K-Mart. Believe me, these little guys produce amazing sound. This is the system of choice for those of you who are "space-challenged." There's good cabling and craftsmanship with a minor glitch: the volume control is on the cable between the computer and the sub-woofer (by necessity). Unfortunately, this cable is not long enough to reach desk level if both the CPU and sub-woofer are on the floor.

Strangely enough, SoundWorks gives good blood-stirring game sound, but seemed flat and muddy when tested with CD-audio music. A solid choice for your game rig, especially if you're in cramped quarters.

$219.99 list, Cambridge SoundWorks, Cambridge, MA, (800) FOR-HIFI, www.hifi.com.

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

LABTECH LCS-2612 SPEAKERS AND SUB-WOOFER

Spatializer 3D technology is this system's one strong point. Consisting of the standard two speaker/sub-woofer configuration, the satellites come with handy brackets that allow them to hang on each side of your monitor like elephant ears. The sub-woofer comes with convenient front panel controls. The craftsmanship was average and cabling was definitely sub-standard with thin, hard-wired speaker wires.

CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS



The sound was unremarkable until you turned on the Spatializer. The depth of sound provided by this feature is noticeable. But despite the improved sonic image, the Labtechs had the loudest hiss of any in this review. All in all, I wasn't very impressed. Be careful, these are quite often standard equipment in bundled computer systems.

$119.99 list, Labtech Enterprises, Inc., Vancouver, WA, (360) 896-2000, www.labtech.com



Five speakers you say? Here is how they break down: You have your traditional R/L speakers, a center speaker that combines both right and left signals, and two special "surround" sound speakers that are positioned behind the listener. The Pro-Logic decoder distributes the appropriate signals to each of the speakers. The cabling was excellent, and setup was a no-brainer.

The quality and depth of sound was excellent! One small problem: the mammoth sub-woofer can really rock da house, but it has no volume control. This could earn any apartment dweller a quick eviction notice. I noticed this right off the bat because the sub-woofer is almost too loud and, sigh, I do live in a apartment. Finally, no hiss! The sound quality was outstanding, even during the tough piano test. If you have the room and tolerant neighbors, go for it.

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MY KINGDOM FOR A SUB-WOOFER!

NUREALITY VIVID3D SPEAKERS

Ah, the magic of technology. The Vivid 3D system is a marvel. Using only two speakers and SRS surround technology, NuReality creates a very convincing depth of sound. While playing MECHWARRIOR I was continually amazed at how the sound seemed to come directly from the monitor (the speakers were several feet away). But I found myself thinking, "if only it had a sub-woofer." The speakers produce reasonable bass tones for normal music, but we're talking games here. You want to "feel" every impact and explosion. Not very realistic, but darn fun. Still, for the price and 3-D effect, these well-made speakers are very tempting. Wood construction, convenient controls, and good cabling round out this offering.

$179.00 list, NuReality, Inc., Santa Ana, CA, (800) 501-8086, www.nureality.com



Five Tips To Shop By

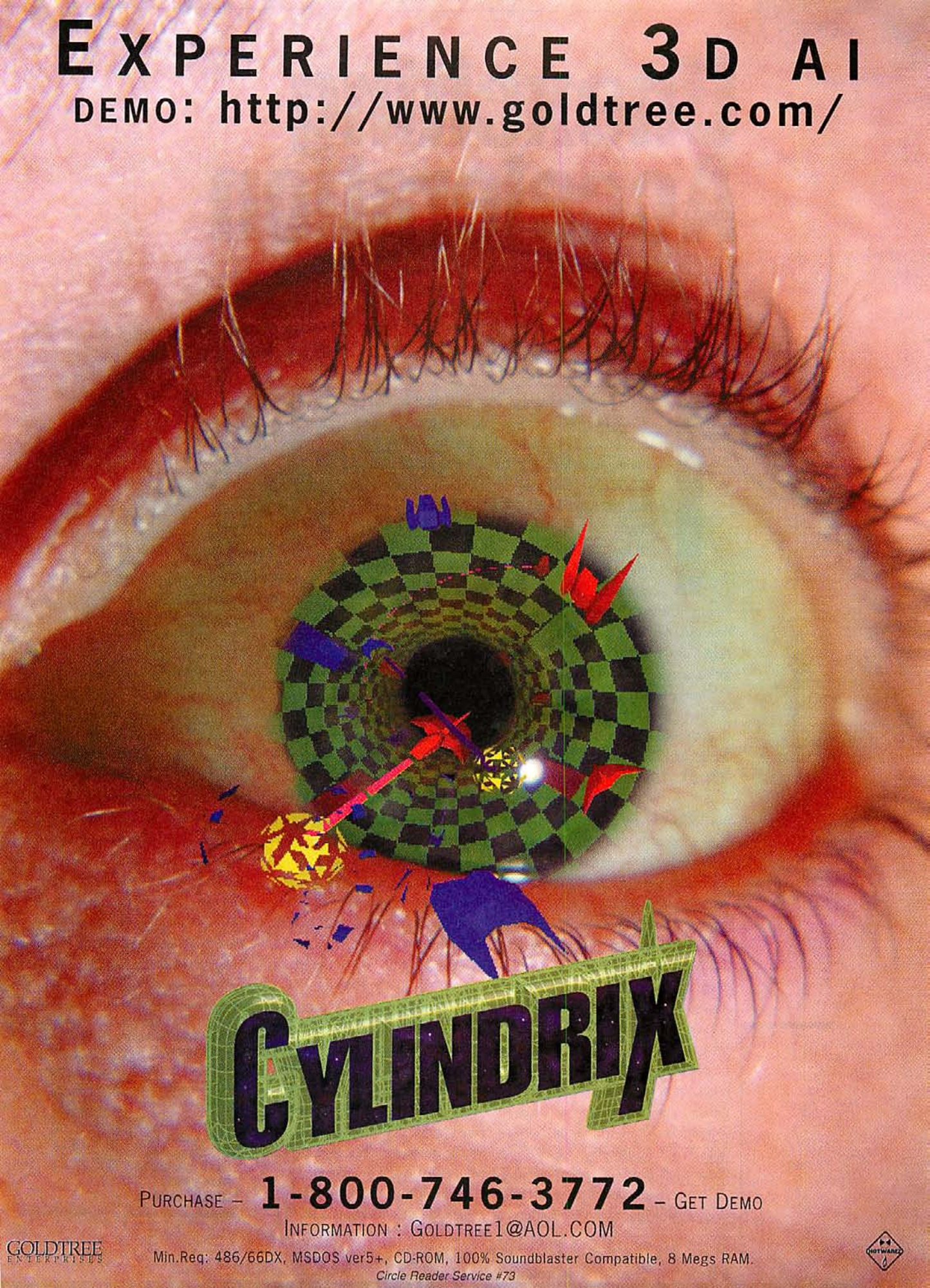
There are a lot of different speaker systems on the market, so rather than trying to cover all these systems or pro-claiming system X as the one to buy, I've covered a few units, and here are my criteria for choosing a speaker system for a game rig. Of course, if you can get to a store where you can listen to the units yourself, that's the best litmus test, since your ears are the best judge.

1. Sub-woofers rule! I don't know how I lived without one. A sub-woofer adds a visceral quality to game sound that can't be beat.
2. Surround/3-D/spatializing technology really works. Some implementations work better then others but in general it seems to be worth the extra bucks.
3. If it hisses, take it back. Fine for serpents, not speakers.
4. If you live in a thin-walled apartment, be sure your sub-woofer has a volume control. Eviction notices and irate neighbors tend to ruin the quality of your gaming experience.
5. Look for thick, high-quality, replaceable cabling.

Speaker System	Gaming Sound	Sub-woofer	Hiss	Depth	Instrumental Music	Vocal Music
AerospaceSV-720/SV-722	Good	Great	Poor	Average	Above Average	Average
Altec-Lansing ACS500	Fair	Poor	Below Average	Good	Above Average	Above Average
Cambridge SoundWorks	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Below Average
Labtec LCS-2612 w/ Sub-Woofer	Average	Above Average	Poor	Good	Below Average	Poor
SSI Cineplex System 1500	Great	Good	Great	Great	Great	Good
NuReality Vivid3D	Good	N/A	Good	Great	Good	Good
A Home Stereo System	Great	Good	Great	Average	Great	Great

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Circle Reader Service #73

Unexciting Acceleration

Creative Labs' 3D Blaster Accelerates Some Games On A 486, But Don't Expect Miracles

by Loyd Case

1996 should be the year that 3-D accelerators hit the streets in force. Finally, the industry seems to be settling on two or three real-time, 3-D Application Programming Interface (API) standards, allowing programmers to write 3-D games to an API rather than to the registers of every 3-D chip out there. And the price points look about right, too, with $200-$300 being the target for 3-D accelerators with 2 MB of RAM.

Creative Labs is one of the first companies to release a 3-D accelerator, the 3D BLASTER, which began shipping late last year. Based on a cost-reduced version of 3D LABS' GLiNT chipset, the 3D BLASTER is only available for VESA local bus (VLB for short). The idea is to give all those 486s out there an end-of-life performance kicker. However, the swift move to aggressively-priced Pentium PCI systems has apparently caught many people by surprise, including the folks at Creative.

The 3D BLASTER has both Windows 3.1 and Windows 95 drivers, and will support Microsoft's Direct3D API when it comes out later this year. The marketing mavens at Creative state that when running games written to 3D BLASTER's Creative Graphics Library API, the GLiNT engine's performance is equivalent to a software-only 3-D rendering engine running on a Pentium. Is it that good? Not really. Maybe the marketing folks at Creative only have 60 MHz Pentiums.

The card is very easy to set up; after ripping the lid off your system, you find an available VLB slot and insert the card. Creative decided to use a VGA pass-through, rather than trying to use the infamous VGA feature connector, a smart decision on their part. To use it, you need to run a cable (provided in the box) from your VGA adapter to the 3D BLASTER. Then you connect your monitor cable to another connector on the 3D card. Software installation is simple, with only one driver to install, although you'll have to be careful to assign the proper IRQs.



BLASTER PACK The 3D BLASTER comes with NASCAR RACING, MAGIC CARPET PLUS, FLIGHT UNLIMITED and HI-OCTANE, but it won't turn your 486 into a Pentium 133.

3D BLASTER's GLiNT chip brings a lot to the party, including hardware Z-buffering (for hidden surface calculations), and perspective-corrected texture mapping in hardware (to prevent texture warping). It also anti-aliases texture maps (to reduce the "jaggies"), and even has transparency blending and fog.

A good software bundle rounds out the mix, and includes 3D BLASTER-accelerated versions of NASCAR RACING, MAGIC CARPET PLUS, FLIGHT UNLIMITED, HI-OCTANE and a good 3-D, first-person shooter called REBEL MOON, all of which are DOS titles. If you're running Windows 95, you can play these games after rebooting into DOS mode.

So how does it play? The news is mixed. NASCAR RACING fared the best, although turning on all the rendering features created a pretty severe drag on the frame rate. FLIGHT UNLIMITED's frame rate at 640x480 with most rendering features enabled was unacceptable. The worst was probably HI-OCTANE; at high-res, HI-OCTANE was simply unplayable.

Overall, if you're looking for a 3-D accelerator for your VL-Bus system, 3D BLASTER is the only show in town. However, don't expect miracles. A better performance kicker would still be a fast Pentium upgrade. On the other hand, that will set you back considerably more than the 3D BLASTER's $299 price tag. 3D BLASTER's support of the eventual Direct3D API will extend the life of that old 486 rig, but given the new CPU-hungry games we're now seeing, the overall experience may still fall short.

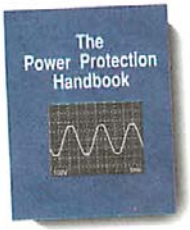
Price: $299 street price (2MB version)
System Requirements: DOS, Windows 3.1, or Windows 95, 486 with VLB, VGA graphics card, 8 MB RAM
Manufacturer: Creative Labs
Milpitas, CA
(800) 998-5227
Reader Service #: 322

APPEAL: Gamers with Vesa local bus machines looking for faster 3-D performance.

PROS: It's the only game in town for VLB 3-D acceleration.

CONS: Performance is still sluggish on these games when most graphic options are on.

CG RATED

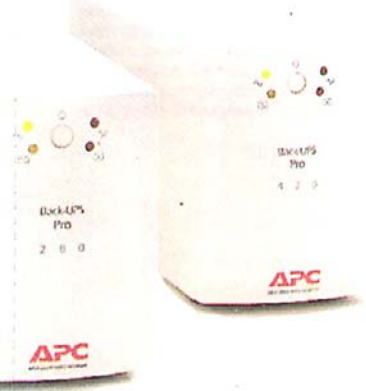


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Circle Reader Service #261

Test Driving The New 4x4

The NEC 4x4 Isn't The Fastest CD-ROM Drive, But It Offers Convenience At A Good Price

by Dave Salvator

NEC's MULTISPIN 4x4 is built more for comfort than for speed. With the 4x4, NEC has chosen to concentrate on multiple disc access, letting you house four CDs simultaneously. That doesn't mean every game which ships on more than one CD will automatically advance to the next disc in the stack, but it does allow easier access to multiple discs.

The 4x4 has both Windows 3.1 and Windows 95 drivers, and ships with its own IDE controller. There are four buttons on the front panel to load and unload discs, and a headphone jack with volume control. Unlike some other NEC units, there are no audio-CD transport controls (play/stop) for audio CDs.



FOUR IN ONE NEC's 4X4 has the advantage of housing four CDs in one unit, but unless a game supports multiple CD-ROM drives, you'll still have to shuffle discs.

The 4x4 is offered at a good price, but there are other units in the same range that are much faster. It's much cheaper than the Plextor 6X, and a little cheaper than Creative's 6X drive. However, since the 4x4 performed more like a 3X drive, the unit loses on the speed front.

Which means that the MULTISPIN's main advantage is its 4-disc capacity. Does this capability come in handy for multi-CD games? Well, that depends. Some games, like WING COMMANDER III, make a call during initialization to check for the presence of multiple CD-ROM drives. If WING III finds more than one CD-ROM drive, it checks whether that additional drive contains a disc, and if so, reads its volume label. In this case, the MULTISPIN would be handy since it switches discs on the fly when you move into a scene on the next disc. However, game developers have to write the code to detect and use multiple CD-ROM drives, and not all of them do. Windows 95's CDFS (CD File System) doesn't really have a provision for applications using multiple CDs either, so here again, it's left to the developer to write that code.

The 4x4's Windows 95 driver presents four separate drive letters, each one representing a physical disc. NEC is working on a new version of their driver that will present a single drive letter and offer a task bar-based utility with information on the four inserted discs that lets you select which one to activate.

The MULTISPIN's installation is well-documented, though somewhat awkward. It's not completely plug-and-play, and requires you to install its driver manually, then scan for new hardware in the Control Panel, where Windows 95 recognizes the controller. And while this procedure is carefully explained in the documentation, it could be better automated. In WinBench tests, the 4x4 was able to achieve only 485 KB/sec throughput—a little better than 3X speed. This shortfall may be due in part to the 4x4's IDE controller, which has to rely more on the CPU to push CD-ROM I/O along.

Given that a lot of games are still running off of one CD-ROM, and speed is king, this unit is hard to recommend for hard-core gaming since it didn't achieve 4X speeds in our tests. Some games will take advantage of multiple drives if they're present, but there's no standard for multi-CD-ROM configs in either DOS or Windows 95. So it's still up to each game developer to enable multiple CD-ROM drives when initializing. But if you like having ready access to multiple discs without loading/unloading your caddy, and are willing to trade some speed for the convenience, the $279 4x4 (includes controller) may be of interest.

COST/PERFORMANCE COMPARISON

Company	Product	Interface Transfer Rate* (bytes/sec)	Price
NEC	MultiSpin 4x4IDE	466,652	$279
Plextor	6PlexSCSI	927,164	$509
Creative Labs	Blaster CD 6XEIDE	952,223	$299

*Based on WING COMMANDER III install.

Price: $279
Manufacturer: NEC Technologies
Wood Dale, IL
(800) NEC-INFO
www.nec.com
Reader Service #: 323

APPEAL: For users who want ready access to multiple CDs.

PROS: Fairly easy setup, easy to use. For games that support multi-CD-ROM drives, the MULTISPIN 4x4 makes advancing to the next disc a little easier.

CONS: The unit doesn't really deliver 4X performance, and there are much faster units available. Some games don't support multiple CD drives, so you'll still have to do the CD shuffle.

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Fore Play

ThrustMaster Builds The Golf Widow's Ultimate Nightmare

by Denny Atkin Sr.

Golfers are crazy. Golfers use vacations to play more golf. They read about golf and watch others play golf. Then they talk about golf with fellow golf nuts. Doesn't sound much different than the typical computer gamer, does it? If you're a golfer *and* a gamer, you understand the meaning of obsession.

ThrustMaster has long catered to the hardcore gamer, with a series of high-end controllers for flight sim fans. Now the company has turned its sights to the digital duffer with PRO PLAY GOLF—THE HOME COURSE, a device that allows golfers to play PC golf games using their own clubs.

PPG includes a base platform with controller unit, a large golf mat, three foam rubber golf balls, reflective tape which you apply to the bottom of your clubs, rubber tees, and a hanging indoor pitching net. Not being a real techie, I was concerned about my ability to properly set up the system, but utilizing the included video and step-by-step instructions, I was standing on the 18th tee at a virtual Pebble Beach, waggling my driver, only a few minutes after unpacking the unit.

The golf mat is an artificial turf layered over a foam base. The balls are made of a light foam rubber, but they do give nice sound feedback when you strike them.

Price: $799.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386 or better, Win 3.1 or better, 0.5 MB hard drive space, 2MB RAM. (Additional space and SVGA required for LINKS 386 software.)
of Players: 1 to 4
Protection: None
Designer: ThrustMaster, Inc.
Publisher: ThrustMaster, Inc. Portland, Oregon (503) 639-3200
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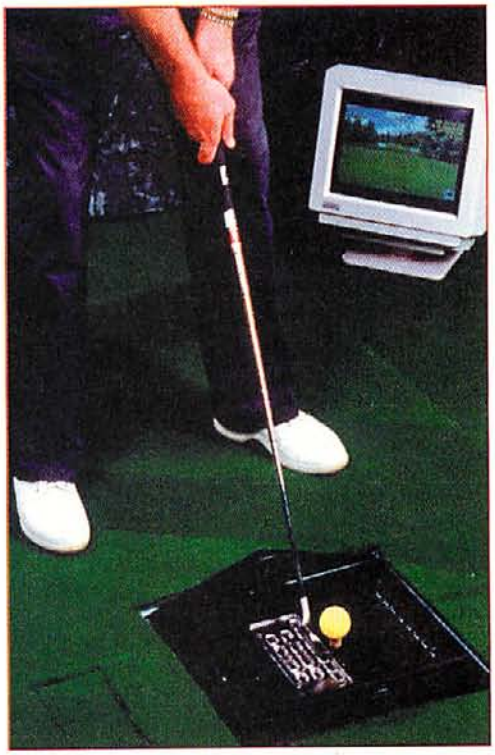
FAST FEEDBACK

PPG isn't just a game controller—it also doubles as a swing analyzer. Using light sensors embodied in the electronic platform, it gives feedback on club head speed, the angle of the club face at impact, club height above the surface, point of ball impact, and direction of follow-through.

The analyzer display is easily visible from several feet away, even using my 9.5-inch screen laptop. Along with a performance graph, it also gives tips on correcting swing errors upon request.

When I first tried this function, I found my swing averaged about 85 mph, and that I was swinging "inside-out," producing a hook. By experimenting with a little earlier break in my wrists and more concentration in the follow-through, I increased my club head speed to 95 mph, and ball direction improved dramatically. The next day, I transferred these ideas to Tualatin Country Club's course and hit longer and straighter drives than I have enjoyed in months.

ThrustMaster also bundles a modified copy of Access Software's LINKS 386 which supports the controller. Using your own clubs is certainly a better way to play the game than watching the screen and trying to click the mouse at the right time. Not only is the control natural, but the swing analyzer function also shows on the screen, giving instant feedback. You might find you'll need to quickly move closer to the screen to follow the ball's flight, unless you have younger eyes than I do.



PUTTING AROUND PRO PLAY GOLF lets hard-core duffers hit the course anytime, rain or shine.

REAL BALLS ARE BETTER

The PPG system provides a very real experience, only held back by the fact that you aren't hitting real balls. (ThrustMaster says it's possible to hit real balls, in the proper environment.) It gives both the novice and experienced golfer useful swing feedback, and it's a superior controller for games such as LINKS 386. While the price may seem a major investment, many golfers don't blink an eye at spending as much as $500 for a new jumbo titanium driver.

APPEAL: Truly obsessed golfers with some discretionary income.

PROS: The device gives you serious and helpful feedback on your golf swings, in addition to bringing interactive games to life.

CONS: You'll need a fairly large space to swing the club, and a hefty wad of cash to drive this baby home.

CG RATED ★★★★

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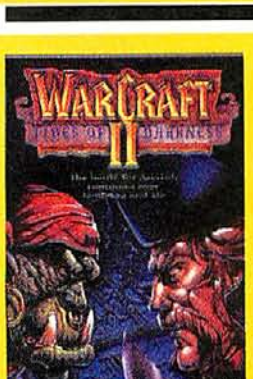
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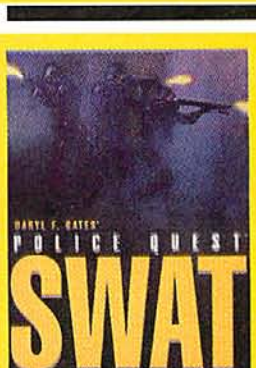
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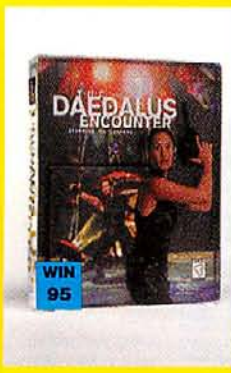
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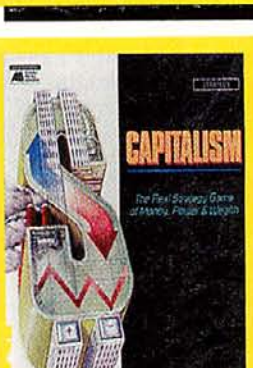
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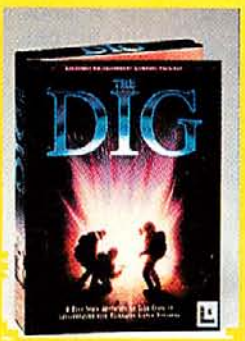
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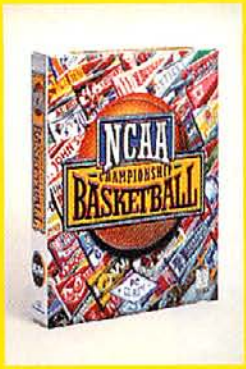
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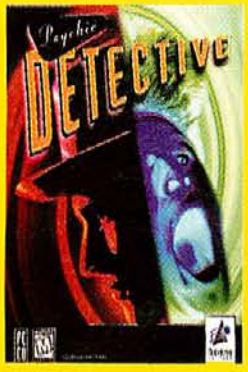
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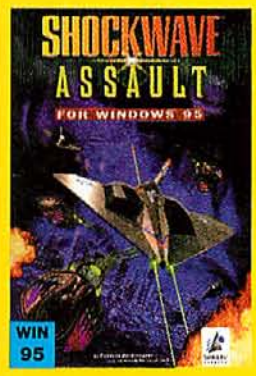
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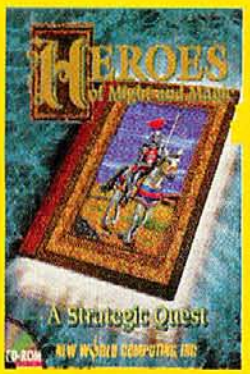
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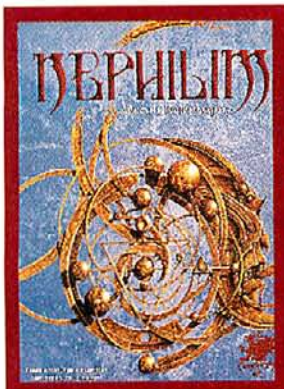
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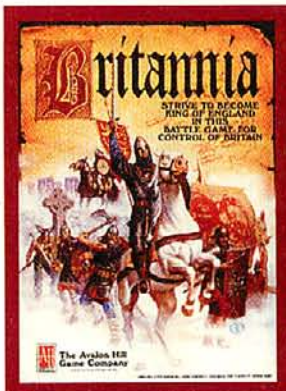
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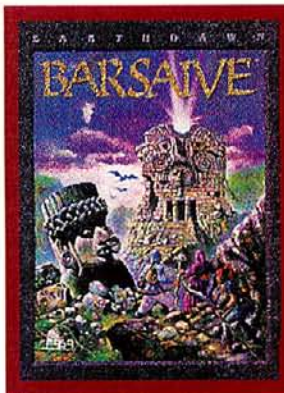
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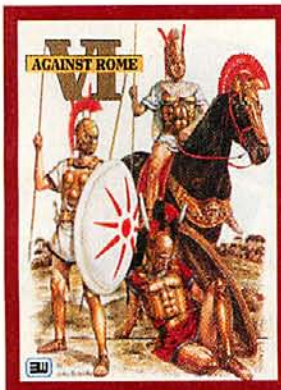
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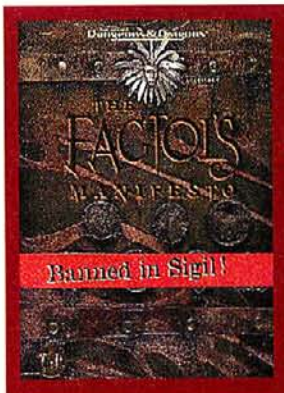
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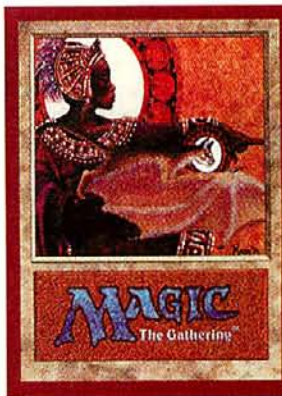
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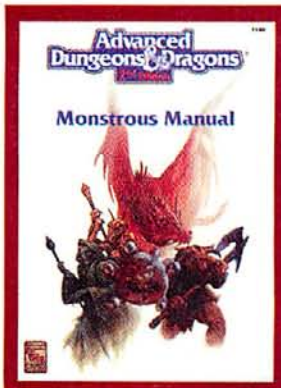
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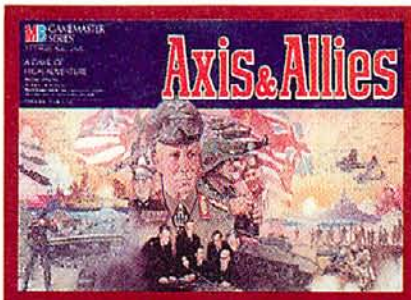
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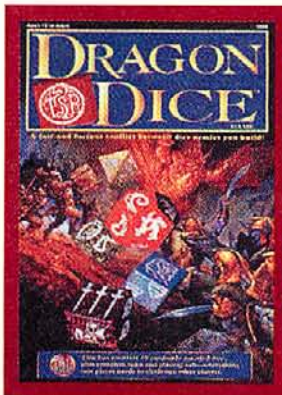
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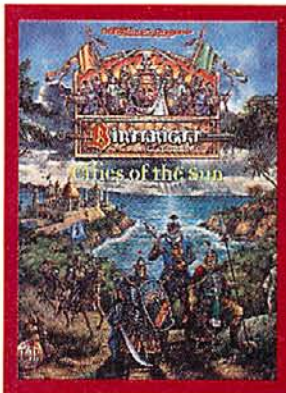
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Legend Re-forges The Sword Of Shannara



In *Sword of Shannara*, the first of Terry Brooks' Shannara series of novels, Shea Ohmsford, a half-Elf, undergoes an arduous trek to recover the legendary Sword, the only weapon that can defeat the undead wizard Brona. The Sword of Shannara is not the traditional weapon for slicing and dicing; rather, it is a revealer of truth. Whoever holds the sword sees himself as he really is, shorn of all self-illusion. Not an easy thing for most people to face.

Shea is able to withstand this revelation, and touches Brona (who does not believe himself to be dead) with the sword, putting an end to this evil creature. Of course, in fantasy, nothing is forever, and Brona has returned 20 years later in SHANNARA, the third in Legend's "based on a fantasy book series." Unlike Companions of Xanth and Death Gate, SHANNARA is more a sequel than an adaptation of a literary work.

ELVEN DESCENDANTS WALK WITH THE DEAD

Shea's son, Jak (whom you direct throughout the game), is chosen to wield the sword and face Brona, as only a descendant of the Elven House of Shannara can do the job properly. Events begin with Jak receiving a visit from the mysterious Druid, Allanon, who tells him about Brona and sends him off to the kingdom of Leah. Along the way, Jak meets Shella, King Menion's daughter, who becomes the first of several companions for the journey.

In Leah, they save Menion's life, then continue on to Tyrsis, resting place of the Sword. Tyrsis is plagued with nightly visits from the walking dead, and the Sword vault is barred by a magical barrier. After dealing with these problems, and picking up another companion, Brendel the Dwarf, Jak discovers the Sword of Shannara has been shattered (no surprise to anyone who watched the game's prologue and saw this happen).

Allanon shows up again, and tells Jak the Sword must be reforged. So off he goes to the lands of the Elves, Trolls, Dwarfs and Gnomes. In each, he must find both a certain magic item and a member of that particular race who can use it, then convince that person to join the party. Only when the powers of these items are invoked in unison can the Sword be repaired.

Naturally, each land presents certain difficulties to overcome, including stopping a war between the Elves and Trolls, and finding the stolen Hammer in the land of the Dwarfs, among others. Eventually, the Sword is made whole again, and Jak goes on to the final confrontation with Brona.

The game's interface is similar to that in the previous ones. As the cursor runs over hot spots, words appear on the screen and sentences form. For instance, putting the cursor over a tree might bring up "Look at the tree." Clicking the mouse would perform the action.

Using items works the same way. An object can be held on the cursor and moved around the screen to see what, if anything, can be done with it. Additional commands usually appear on the right side of the main display, and these vary depending on the active item. "Climb" for example, might appear when the active item is a tree, but not when it's a fishing pole.

Each party member has his or her own inventory, which Jak can access at any time. Objects can be transferred among the members, or used directly from their inventory, in which case, the use is phrased as a command: "Brendel, chop down the tree with the axe."

Walking around a town or similar place shows a standard one-screen 3-D view,

> **"What could have been a good mid-range adventure game is marred by a poor combat system and an insult to women gamers."**

CRYSTAL BALL

- Caped crusaders are back in vogue. Not only can we expect THE INVULNERABLES from Bullfrog this Spring, but Simtex (of MASTER OF ORION, MASTER OF MAGIC fame) should have SUPERHEROES (working title) ready by late Summer. Maybe Pepe Moreno could finally do a Batman game? (Nah, too many people would want to play it.)
- Interactive Broadcasting is developing a new game for America Online called EXPLORER. If you've ever been a fan of Verne's Phineas Fogg or Doyle's Professor Challenger, this may be your chance to assume the role of explorer and compete against your fellow (or sister) adventurers. The design team promises that this won't be just a SOURCE OF THE NILE game presented in an online environment.

SCORPIA



LEGEND-ARY SCENERY From the Hildebrant-esque characters to the panaoramic overview maps and the pastoral forest scenes, the art style does a good job of evoking the feel of Brooks' novels, and is a good adaptation of the existing Legend engine.

which changes as Jak & Co. move around. Traveling in the outdoors, the display switches to overhead, showing the immediate vicinity and small icons for the party.

Wilderness travel is dangerous, as monsters lurk everywhere. Usually, you can see them before they are too close, and the critters can be avoided with a little care. It is generally best to walk slowly outdoors so you don't end up rushing into unpleasant situations.

While this is an adventure game, it does have a combat system of sorts, and several monster encounters are unavoidable. Presumably, this was put in to prevent the game from seeming too static, and to make it more exciting.

The party usually goes first, and Jak can give orders to the others in the group. This is along the lines of the ULTIMA-style of "attack strongest," "attack weakest," "attack the leader," "defend yourself," and so on. If no special orders are given, each person chooses a target at random.

Monsters appear at the top of the screen in separate boxes, and the party at the bottom. Below each box is the "hit point line" showing the current health of the critter or character. It starts as green, becomes yellow for injury, and red for severe injury. When the bar disappears entirely, the person or monster is out of the fighting.

Party members won't die if they fall in combat (unless everyone does), but they won't be in great shape afterwards. This is another reason to avoid unnecessary combat, along with the fact that fighting gains you nothing, as there is no experience or treasure to be obtained after a battle.

I did not much care for this system, and would have preferred being able to choose specific targets for each party member. Jak himself is no great fighter, and didn't appear to improve over time. The others are better, but even so, fighting seemed a drawn-out experience more than an exciting one. Also, I noticed that on occasion, a monster's bar would be down to nothing, yet it still fought on, which did not improve matters any.

Conversation is an important part of the game, and handled by clicking on a person, then choosing from a menu of things to say. In some circumstances, careful manipulation of the conversation is the only way to accomplish certain goals, so close attention is necessary when talking to people. One nice feature (that more games need) is the ability to have all spoken lines show up also as text, so persons with hearing problems or unsupported sound cards are not left out.

For the most part, the puzzles in SHANNARA are not very difficult. Often, if a solution looks obvious, that's what it is: the obvious solution. This could give veteran gamers some trouble, because it's often the blatant answer that gets overlooked (as happened to me on a couple of occasions).

Graphically, the game is good although not spectacular, and the voice acting is adequate. SHANNARA was shaping up as a decent mid-range adventure, when I came to the one point that infuriated me. This was the death of Shella.

I would not have minded had she died gloriously in battle; that is often the fate of heroes and heroines. What happens is: Shella is mortally wounded, but lingering on, and Jak—to save her soul—must kill her on the spot and perform a certain ritual. The only woman in the entire game, and she not only dies, but goes out a helpless lump.

I've heard that game designers are wondering how they can get more women playing games; if they keep presenting us with garbage like this, it isn't going to happen any time soon. Far too many products these days have exclusively male heroes doing this, that, and the other; women are either nonexistent or mere adjuncts, at best.

It is all the more surprising since this game was designed by Corey and Lori Cole, from whom we expect much better. If they were trying to show the old "a hero's road is a tough one, and sometimes hard things have to be done, etc.," they have failed utterly, and only presented a slap in the face to women gamers everywhere.

In any case, if you can get by that point, and also endure the silly combat, SHANNARA overall is an average adventure game, suitable more to the casual or novice gamer, and Shannara fans. Veteran adventurers are likely to whip through this one with little trouble.



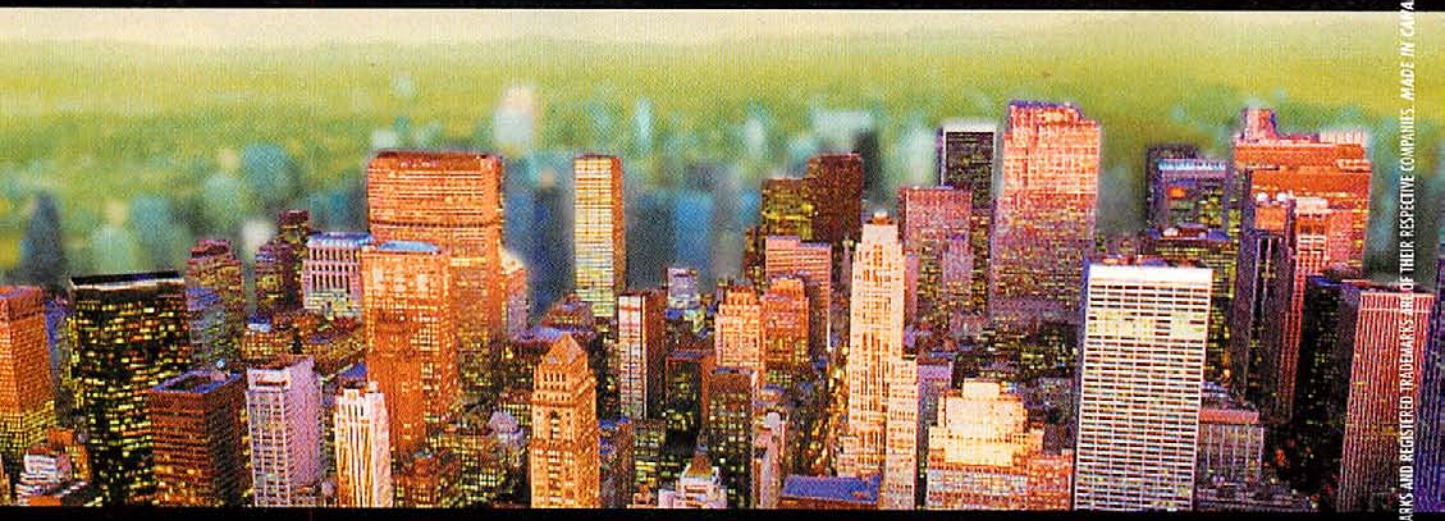
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Designers: Lori and Corey Cole
Publisher: Legend Entertainment Company
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CG TIPS!

▶ In the 7th & 8th hours of 11th Hour, you may have trouble finding objects. Try the Library, the Picture Gallery, or Brian Dutton's Room. From the end of Hour 8—"A man-horse on the fly sounds like a wounded bull's eye."—you aren't actually looking for a centaur here, but rather a winged man-bull, an old Assyrian petroglyph which had religious significance in ancient Mesopotamia.—*A. Dembo*

▶ When in doubt, make sure you've examined all of Stauf's art. Not only does the old man have excellent taste, but quite a few of the "objects" mentioned in the game are actually represented on canvas.—*A. Dembo*

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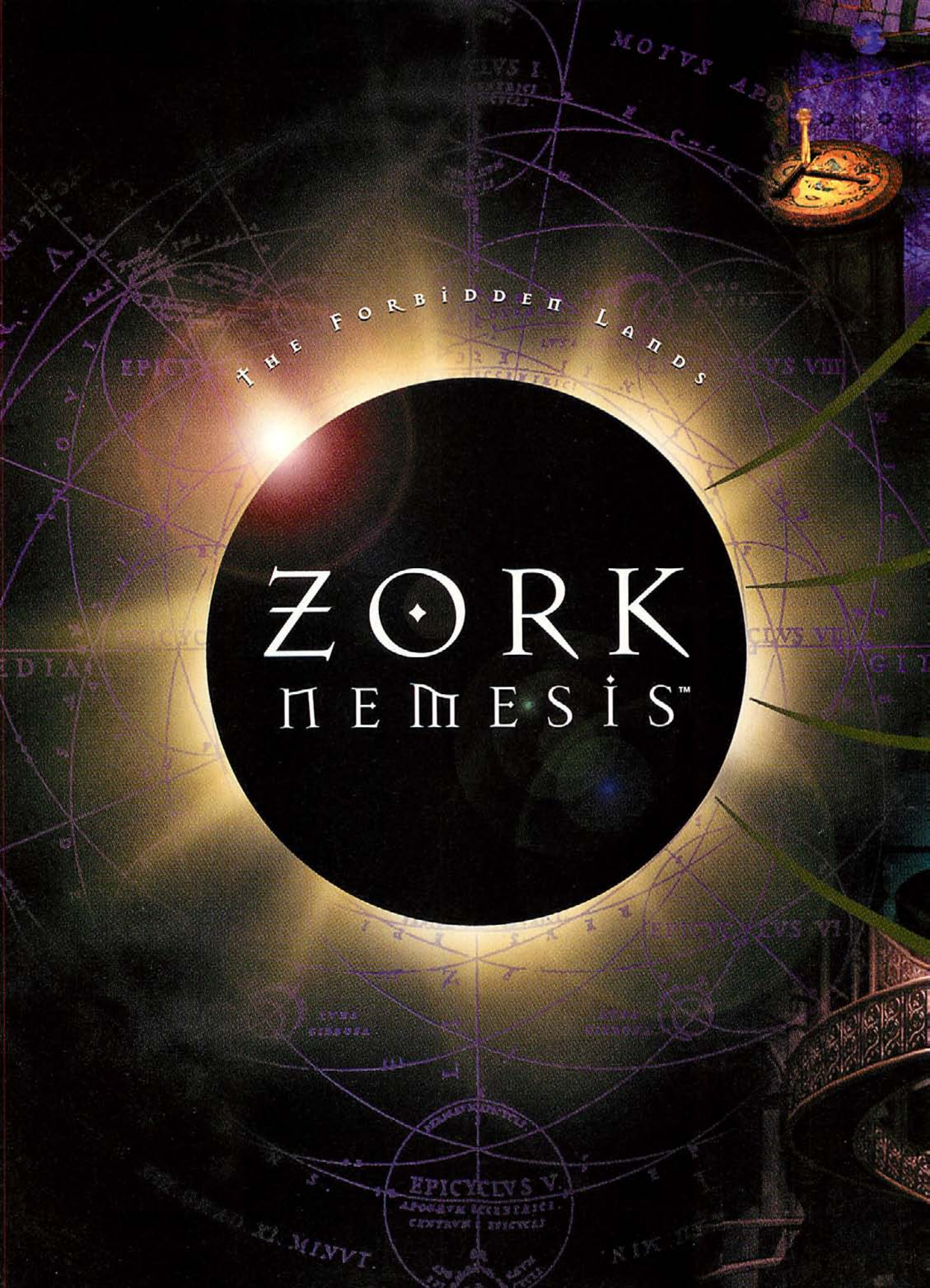
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Howlin' Wolf

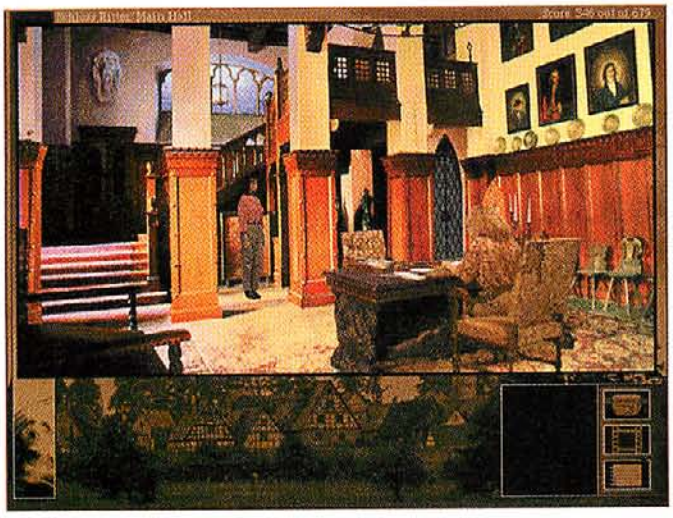
Our Resident Schattenjaeger *Has Ways To Untangle Your Werewolf's Fur*

This month, we peer into the dark mists surrounding GABRIEL KNIGHT 2: THE BEAST WITHIN. All right, let's howl! **Chapter 1.** We start with Gabe at the farmhouse. Take a good look around and click on everything. Check the outdoors carefully for evidence of wolf activity (oh yes, one's been around, and he's *big*). You should have a couple of interesting items by the time you're ready for Munich. Naturally, Gabe wants to become acquainted with his lawyer, and probably has something to mail, too. Then it's off to the zoo for some investigating about the missing wolves. Thomas isn't helpful, but you do get to hear about Mr. Klingmann. He has some interesting information regarding wolves, but won't let Gabe in to see the pack at the zoo. We can do something about that, however. The tape recorder has several handy features.

After seeing the wolves, you'll probably want some lab work done; Gabe's information man can assist with that. Then it's a good idea to look over the receipt, especially the back (which is backwards). It's also helpful to know what it says before messing around in private hunt clubs. A little documentation, and we're done with Gabe for now.



THE GABRIEL TAPES One of the tougher puzzles in the game requires you to splice the tape at the Huber estates.



HURLY-GERDE In Chapter 4, if the game crashes when talking to Gerde, try reinstalling and running under DOS.

Chapter 2. Now we're with Grace at Schloss Ritter. She's here to do research, but Gerde (the housekeeper), while pleasant, isn't very helpful. So Grace will have to do it the hard way for awhile. Head to town and talk with everyone you can, starting with Herr Huber at the Goldener Lowe (sorry, he just won't tell Grace where Gabe is hanging out), and working around from there.

So, there was a werewolf trial in Rittersberg awhile back, eh? The *Schattenjaeger* library back at the castle probably has some info on it. Too bad Gerde's being tough about the key. Maybe we can do something there, especially now that the workman is gone and you can investigate the fireplace more closely.

You won't come across a more obvious switch for a secret passageway (heh). Where does it lead? Well, go in and find out! Don't worry, it's safe. And before long, you'll be snooping amongst the volumes in the library. Oops! Gerde just walked in (how embarrassing!). After the rather volatile scene that follows, Gerde's not feeling too friendly, but at least Grace has the run of the library from now on. Make use of that, grabbing (and reading!) everything you can. Except stuff on Ludwig II. That's harder, because Grace's German is a bit weak. But maybe she knows someone who can help. A fellow academic, for instance.

Now let's go find out about that werewolf trial. Ouch! Drawn, quartered, and burned at the stake; they sure didn't mess around with werewolves in the old days, eh? There may be more to learn yet; look through the dungeon window for inspira-



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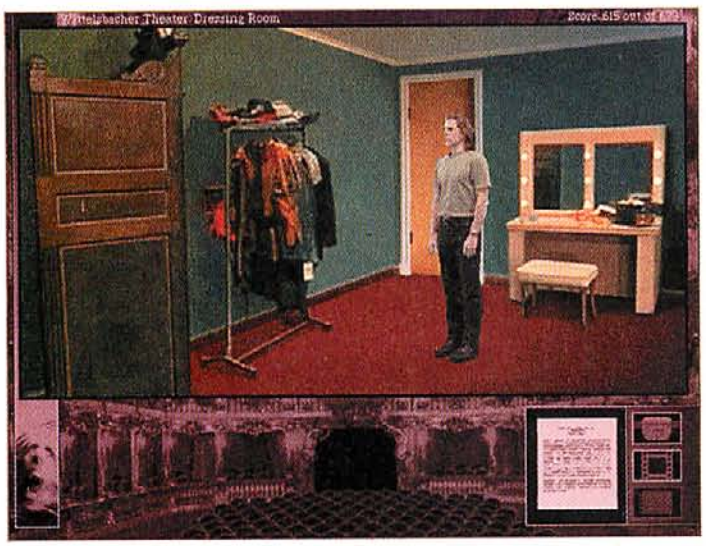
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tion if you need it. After that, you'll probably want to do something with all this research (Grace wasn't doing it for herself, after all).

Chapter 3. We're back with Gabe now, starting the day at the farmhouse. Check the paper, there's been another wolf killing, right in the city this time (daring, isn't he?). Then it's off for a busy day in Munich. The lawyer is a good place to begin, and you'll probably want to chat with Baron Von Glower (he *did* give you his card).

There's no one but Xaver, the secretary at the Hunt Club, so this is a good time to snoop around in the back hall. Hmm, what could be behind that locked door? I bet Xaver has the keys, and I also bet he wouldn't hand them over. A diversion is necessary here. This is tricky. Check out the shops at Marienplatz, and see what's available. Then you'll need an inconspicuous place to put the item. After you get



KEEP YOUR DAY JOB Before dressing for the performance, take a good look around—slowly.

the key and unlock the door, remember the key must be returned! Hmm, interesting little ritual room down here, isn't it? Take a good look around, but be quick, because Von Zell will show up soon and kick you out of there.

Say, isn't that the scene of the wolf killing up the block (so close to the club, hmmm). Inspector Leber won't give Gabriel the time of day, but we can get his attention. If there's one thing cops hate more than ordinary busybodies, it's publicity of the unfavorable kind. Hey, it gets you into the police station, and a chat with Leber, so it's not all bad.

Be sure to check out the map before leaving the police station. Another visit to the lawyer and the Baron wouldn't hurt, either. Then Gabe can spend the evening relaxing at the hunt club, and wondering how he can hear the conversation between Klingmann and Von Zell. It would be just a little *too* blatant, even for Gabe, to just plunk a tape recorder there. A bit of camouflage is necessary, and that takes care of this day.

Chapter 4. Time for Grace, who has a busy day planned, at the castle again. Look over the library before leaving, just in case. Hmmm, no Gerde downstairs; wonder where she is? We'll find her eventually. Off to town. Do the usual rounds (skip the town hall), starting with the inn. Mrs. Smith *is* for real, amazing as it seems, and she's important. Continuing on, we find Gerde in the crypt, and oh my! Grace did put her foot (both feet) in it. Gerde never cared a thing for Gabe (smart lady). However, now Grace has to make up with her. Flowers will do; you should know where to find them. At last, Grace has the car keys and can go traveling.

At Neuschwanstein, play the tour tape in every room (including the entry). Click on every possible object for a close-up. Click on the close-up if possible. If the tour tape appears for an item, play the tape. In the bedroom, move the cursor to the right for an "exit" that turns you around to see the stove with the *Tristan and Isolde* figures (this is all too easy to miss). Check the map when you leave the castle; if Neuschwanstein still blinks, go back and do it again.

At the Ludwig Museum, do much the same (there is no tour tape, fortunately). In this case, make sure Grace reads everything aloud, be it a letter, wall plaque, or whatever. Get a close-up of the clerk, then move the cursor towards the upper left for an exit to an exhibit room in the back (this is easy to miss, and is of critical importance). Talk to the clerk twice before leaving. If the Ludwig Museum blinks after you leave, go back and do it again.

At the Wagner Museum, follow the same drill. This is easier, as there are no sneaky rooms to find, and exhibits are fewer (but still important). Chat with Georg before leaving. The Wagner Museum will blink, as this is where the chapter ends later.

So you're done with the museum tour. Grace probably wants to talk to Mrs. Smith, and there's a follow-up to yesterday's phone call that needs to be made. That sets up a meeting with Herr Dallmeier, who knows a lot about Ludwig II, and that Ludwig's diary isn't available for inspection. He also knows a bit about the Black Wolf.

Back to the castle for more phone calls (don't wanna see *this* phone bill!), and a chat with Gerde. This is a good time to mail something, and then work on Mrs. Smith's suggestion of getting in touch with Ludwig yourself. Check around the vicinity of the church.

After the little "seance," head back to the castle. Your score should be 360 at this point, and after entering and leaving the castle, the fax should be waiting at the post office.

Chapter 5. Gabe again. Naturally, he wants the tape from last night, and seeing the lawyer is also high on his list. The police station is the only other available location, so have another chat with Herr Leber. He'll be more cooperative if you show him something, and that will open a new area. Dorn is not a nice person, but you have to pay him to get anywhere here. It sure clears up a few things, eh? As for the tiger cage, well, that's a hungry cat; need I say more?

Now it's time for that little hunting trip in the great outdoors. Speaking of which, it's a good idea to explore the lodge environs thoroughly, and a map of the woods will come in handy later tonight. A chat with everyone available also helps. Klingmann will need a little persuasion, but I'm sure you have his weakness

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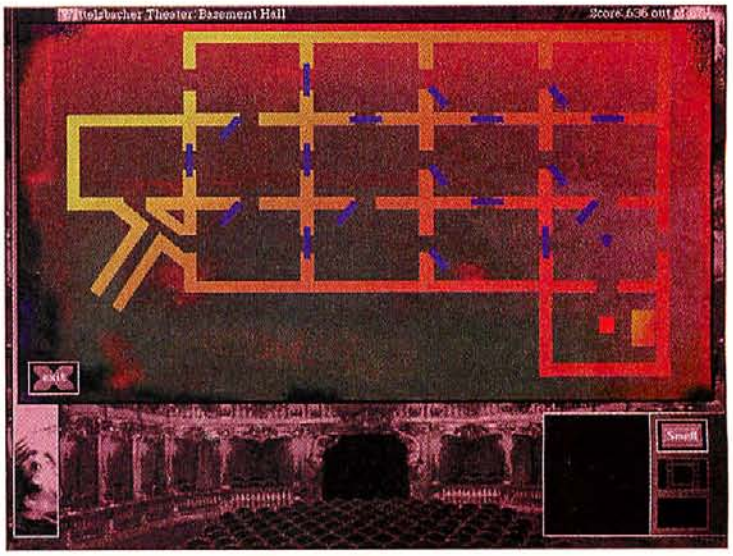
tagged. Von Zell isn't around, so this is the right time to snoop in his room (check Preiss' room).

Then you can visit the cave again (you *did* find it earlier, yes?) and confirm your suspicions, rather unpleasantly. There's one rather obvious person you can talk to about this, so do that...and then it's time for the midnight werewolf hunt. You have to drive it to the ravine. Only the Ritter talisman works here, so be ready with that as you make your way through the woods. You'll probably die once or twice during the attempt, but if you're careful, it shouldn't take you too long to do this.

Chapter 6. The most involved. Here you will run both Gabe and Grace at different times, starting with Grace in Rittersberg. Our boy is there, too, in the dungeon. The only safe place, in case he turns into a werewolf (midnight hunts are not without their drawbacks).

The first part of this chapter has Grace retrieving the parts of the lost Wagner opera. Three are in Neuschwanstein, and one in Altotting, as you know from the opening movie. Do check around town before leaving, though, and don't forget the birdie.

At Neuschwanstein, the first opera section can be obtained by using something from Altotting (such vandalism!). The second section requires only patience, and the third can be gotten with, so to speak, a flight of fancy in the side hall. The penitent offerings at Altotting probably reminded you of something, but you'll need permission first. Then you can go there with your own offering. Before doing anything with it, check out the chapel first. What happens after the heart is donated is a hint on what Grace needs to do, and after that, we segue to opening night of the opera. Grace has a lot to do here, too. Walking around and becoming familiar with the opera house helps. There are some things in the office she needs. Gabe is there, too (not in great shape). We'll be getting to him later on. In the meantime, visit the cellar (you may want to map this) to find the prop room (important place). Look in backstage (important item here). Talk to everyone you can. Examine items in the inventory, and find the spotlight room.



WOLF HUNT While this may look like a maze, it's really a strategy mini-game. Limit the options of the real werewolf and back him into the furnace room.

You also must make sure that the two special guests for this evening are seated in the right place. When all is done, the usher will alert Grace that there're only five minutes to opening the doors. Time to bring Gabe downstairs and dress for the performance. After the chat with Leber, it's wise to ensure the quarry is in place, and then also ensure that he can't get out. With that done, we switch to Gabe in the prop room. As you might expect, he has to get out of there. Not too hard, if you look around carefully in back and click here and there.

Backstage, he has to pick up something, from about the same place Grace did. This item is not easy to see, so move the cursor slowly to the right. Then into the dressing room he goes. Yep, Gabe is gonna perform in the opera (just as well it's a non-singing part!).

Uh oh, someone's coming. Better not let him see you; let's cloud things up a bit and get out of sight. Then that backstage item will come in real handy. This moves us into the opera itself. Just sit there and enjoy the performance, because when it ends, the wolf hunt begins.

Gabe and his quarry will be in the basement, both as wolves. The goal is to drive the other werewolf into the furnace room, by shutting the room doors in the correct way. This is the only solution; if Gabe fights wolf-to-wolf, he will die. If the other werewolf gets away, Gabe also dies. So it's the furnace room or nothing.

The immediate task is to close the doors on the left side, blocking access to the easy exits. Then it becomes harder, as you have to shut the doors so as to make a single path to the furnace room, without leaving the quarry an exit, or forcing him into a dead end. Remember, once a door is shut, it can't be opened again.

In the furnace room is Herr Leber and Grace. You can switch between Grace and Gabe here, and that is necessary. Something must be done and only Grace can do that. But only Gabe can take the action that will kill the Black Wolf. Time it carefully.

Whew! That should be enough of wolves, Wagner, and Ludwig II to last us all a long, long time. And we're just about out of time here, as I see by the invisible clock on the wall. Until next time, happy adventuring!

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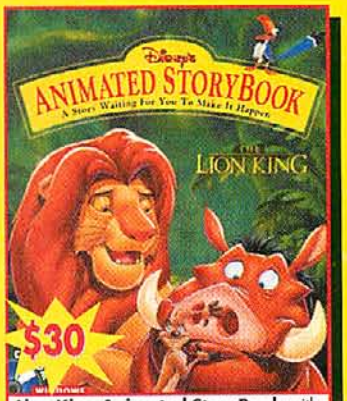
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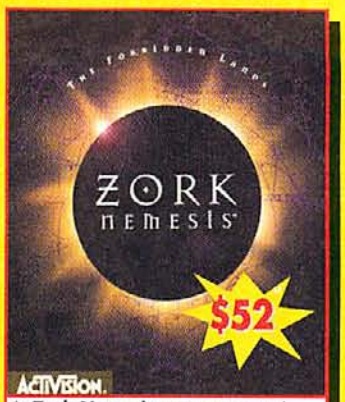
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SNEAK PREVIEW
GAME STILL IN DEVELOPMENT

Murphy Strikes Again

Film Noir Meets B-Movie Sci-Fi In This UNDER A KILLING MOON *Sequel*

by Denny Atkin

It's been 100 years since *The Maltese Falcon*, but nobody told Tex Murphy. Never seen without his fedora, trenchcoat, and pack of Lucky Strikes, Murphy's a detective who fancies himself a PI in the mold of Spade or Marlowe. With his non-stop wiseguy banter and lucked-into-it problem-solving, though, he comes across more like Jim Carrey on downers.

My encounter with Murphy started on a dark and foggy day, when Coleman dropped a Fed-Ex on my desk. "Murphy's back," he said. "Better check this out." I opened the tea-stained envelope and found, not a mysterious manila folder, but four gold CDs with "The Pandora Directive" hand-scrawled on them along with a cryptic letter saying that Tex Murphy was on the trail of the government's biggest secret of the 20th century. "Must be either the Roswell Incident, or the two mil Bill C. spent on lush foot-massages for Arkansas highway patrolmen," I told Coleman. "I'll let you know what I find out."

I broke out my files on Murphy. This digitized gumshoe had quite a history. Back in '89, his exploits were chronicled in MEAN STREETS, a groundbreaking adventure game which was one of the first PC products to use both VGA and digitized sounds—and which remains to my knowledge the only adventure to toss in a flight simulator for good measure. Seems Murphy reappeared in THE MARTIAN MEMORANDUM, an enjoyable little yarn that didn't really break much new ground. UNDER A KILLING MOON, released back in '94, brought Murphy and the gang back to the bleeding edge of adventure gaming. Although much of the hype centered around Access having awakened Margot Kidder and Brian Keith from a big sleep in order to star in the game, the real thrills came from the 3-D universe Murphy had been dropped into. This time around, he saved the world by wandering through rendered rooms that looked about as good as the ones in THE 7TH GUEST, but with more freedom of movement than DOOM. Add in cinematic sequences, known (if a bit tired) actors, and a mystery that reached all the way into earth orbit and you had one of the best adventure games of the decade. The experience was dampened only by a script that packed more corn than an Iowa harvest festival.

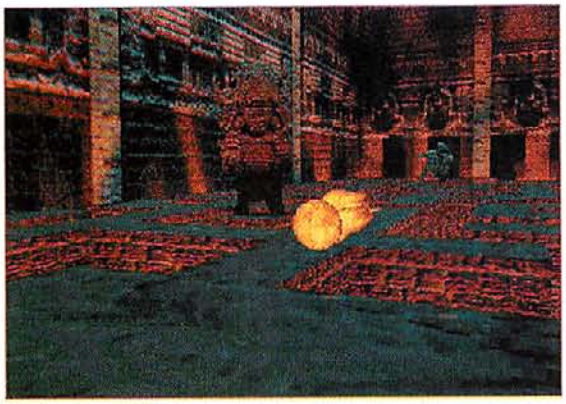


FAMILIAR DIGS Much of Murphy's initial footwork is done on good old Chandler Avenue. The Fuschia Flamingo is a new addition to the neighborhood.

CRUISING CHANDLER

I'd done my homework. It was time to tail Murph and see what he was up to this time. I popped the first disc into my trusty Dell. Not the most romantic device, but it's damned hard to play Sid Meier games on an Underwood portable. A letterboxed opening video popped up, setting the scene. It was the mid-40's (the mid-2040s, that is), and Tex Murphy's luck was running its usual course. Beautiful newsstand owner Chelsee Bando's baby blues were seducing Tex into settling down, but her lips were threatening to move to Phoenix. Eviction was the friendliest thing on the landlord's mind. Tex needed a case, and soon. As luck would have it, his old-style gumshoe appearance attracted the attention of one Gordon Fitzpatrick, who was looking for a lost friend.

A simple missing persons case and an easy $4,000, right? Not with Tex Murphy's luck. It turned out the persona non locatable was one Thomas Malloy, a chief researcher at the Air Force installation in Roswell, New Mexico. And it didn't look



GREAT BALLS O' FIRE Tex Murphy has all the luck—Phillip Marlowe never got to face threats like this.

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like he'd just gone for a ride on a beautiful weather balloon.

The search started in familiar territory. Turns out Malloy had been a resident in the Tex's own building, the inappropriately named Ritz. It looked like piecing this case together was going to make anyone who followed Murphy around on the KILLING MOON adventure feel right at home—the initial investigation, at least, was going to involve talking to the locals on Chandler Avenue, trying to find people who'd seen Malloy, knew where he'd gone and what he was up to. That involved talking to a lot of familiar faces: Chelsee at the newsstand, Rook at the pawn shop, Clint the one-eyed chocoholic, and old dependable Louie at the Brew & Stew.





STAR POWER Northern Exposure's Barry Corbin strikes a threatening pose, while Tanya Roberts steps up from Sheena and Beastmaster.

Unfortunately, when Tex Murphy puts two and two together, the result is often a lot bigger than four. As he worked to track down Malloy, he also got involved with tracking down death threats against a curvaceous exotic dancer, and evading National Security Agency operatives who'd taken an unhealthy interest in his investigation—unhealthy to Tex, that is, who was close to joining the collection of dead bodies that was piling up faster than pancakes at the IHOP.

Then, there was the Roswell connection. Malloy, it appeared, was a linguist, tasked with translating alien runes. With the NSA on his tail, he'd sent out a series of puzzle boxes to trusted friends and relatives, boxes that would have to be pieced together to solve this mystery of cosmic proportions. It was up to Murphy to find out why so many people were willing to kill for the secret contained in these Pandora boxes.

THE STUFF THAT DREAMS ARE MADE OF

I followed Murphy through to the conclusion, but I wouldn't want to spoil the fun by spilling the beans. Turns out there were at least three paths to take, leading to six possible endings. Nice—a detective story you could relive without knowing what was going to happen on the second pass. Even Hammett and Chandler couldn't pull that one off.

The first half of the mystery took place in territory familiar to anyone who played KILLING MOON: a post-WW III San Francisco neighborhood populated by a mix of humans and mutants. Despite the familiar digs, though, the neighborhood seemed nicer. Turns out the tech boys at Access had fiddled with the code and cleaned things up quite a bit. Objects in rooms no longer turned to face you as you moved through rooms, as if drawn to your magnetic personality. More fine-tuning was evident in that many objects kept their detail even when viewed up close, instead of blurring away like the room tends to do after a long visit with detective Jim Beam. The comfort of familiar surroundings faded soon enough, though, as I journeyed with Murphy to Roswell, a secret installation, and an Aztec labyrinth puzzling enough to give Indiana Jones himself a headache. All told, there were over 70 virtual rooms to explore, beautifully rendered in crisp SVGA with a dark, film noir look.

Of course, finding objects and solving puzzles is only part of a PI's job. Digging for info is another. Interacting with the various dramatis personae once again involved a jarring shift from the first person to the third—instead of exploring rooms through Murphy's eyes, I was watching him from across the room and guiding him through conversations by choosing a tone of response from three possibilities. While the perspective shift was jarring, at least the acting wasn't. Kevin McCarthy and Northern Exposure's Barry Corbin seemed to be taking their acting jobs seriously, a welcome improvement over the campy Russell Means and bizarre Margot Kidder performances in KILLING MOON. Tanya Roberts also turned in a good performance, albiet looking more a Joan Collins doppleganger than a former Charlie's Angel or Bond girl here. Some of the acting improvement may have been attributable to the direction of Adrian Carr. Although his more impressive film credits involve editing rather than direction (his directing credits include the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers series), he did pull a better performance from the actors involved than in the preceding cyberflick. In KILLING MOON, designer Chris Jones put in an awkward performance as Murphy. This time, the performance was fine, with only a good percentage of his jokes eliciting groans.

THE LONG GOODBYE

Satisfied with my investigation, I dropped the discs on Coleman's desk. "Looks like another Access winner," I told him. "The engine's the same, and the scenery's familiar, but the new story should keep gamers happy." I told him about the online hint section that would trade solutions for points, and the new play level for experienced gamers that doesn't offer hints, but doubles the point possibilities and offers "a unique reward at the end of the game."

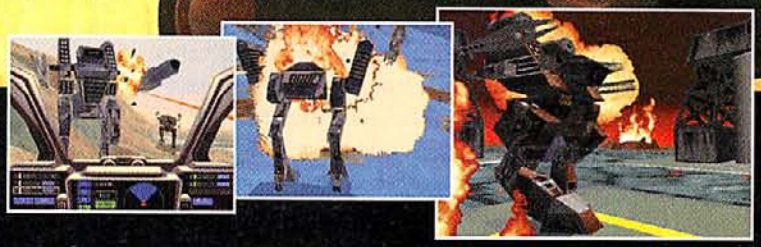
"There's even a novelization available from Prima," I added. "It's an amusing—if awkward—read. You don't often find the protagonist looking for objects in adventure-game style in most books, and there are so many positive cigarette references you'd think the guy was on the take from R.J. Reynolds. Still, it's a good guide if you get stuck in the plot."

Another case closed. I deserved a break. Down to John's Grill for a cup of joe? Nah, I decided to grab my clubs and hit the Links.

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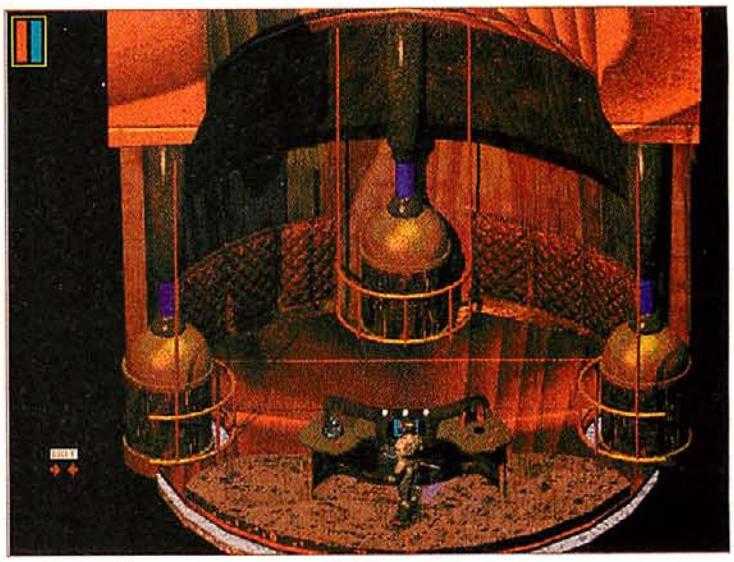
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Sir-Tech's Step Child

DRUID Fails To Live Up To Its Forebears

by Petra Schlunk

Call it a blessing or a curse, but every new role-playing and adventure game from Sir-Tech will inevitably be compared with their successful Wizardry series. As an adventure game with minor role-playing elements, DRUID: DAEMONS OF THE MIND might get a double helping of "Does it measure up?" from Sir-Tech fans. As "The Man With No Name," you play an unnamed druid brought to the world of Navan by three other druids to assist them in finding their missing brother. Each druid rules an island, which you must visit in your quest to find clues about the disappearance.



LOST IN SPACE: DRUID's elegantly retro "Flash Gordon" spacecraft adds a little variety to the typical old-world adventure theme.



Price: $59.95
System Requirements: 486DX/33 or better (486DX2/66 or better recommended), 4 MB RAM (8MB recommended), SVGA graphics, 12 MB hard drive space, 2 x CD-ROM (4X recommended), mouse; most sound cards supported (16-bit sound card recommended).
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Matt Stott (lead designer)
Publisher: Sir-Tech Software
Ogdensburg, NY
(800) 447-1230
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THE DIRECT APPROACH

Essentially, gameplay in DRUID follows a linear course. You begin the game without options for No Name's character or control over his statistics. He will acquire experience points, gain levels, improve his health (body points), and magic power (mind points) as he progresses through the game. You start out on an island called the Common Ground, which accommodates a jail, an arena for building up No Name's physical statistics, a library, a site containing Stonehenge-like megaliths, and a temporarily restricted area. He will spend some time here studying, improving his abilities, and gathering information before travelling to the next island.

You must solve most of the puzzles on each island before No Name can acquire the "Ogham" keystones he needs to continue his journey. These rune-inscribed stones fit into the megaliths found on each island. He can't continue his journey until he properly rotates each stone to match the correct symbol in these druidic structures.

You view No Name's progress from a three-quarter overhead perspective as he travels from area to area looking for items to use, people to meet, and creatures to fight. DRUID sports a nicely designed mouse-driven interface, which features an arrow-shaped cursor. The cursor changes color when it passes over something that No Name can touch or use and turns into an exit sign if an area leads to somewhere else. You can pick up and identify an object by dragging and clicking it on an icon of No Name's face in the Main Menu screen. Similarly, you can use an object by clicking it on other objects or people.

Almost every item in the game forms part of a puzzle. No Name can talk to other characters, give them items, or fight them, although you can't order him to fight a friendly or harmless character. You can read conversations at your leisure by clicking the text on the screen, with highlighted hypertext keywords providing additional information. Conversations rarely involve game-affecting choices and are primarily a means of learning new information.

A DASH OF HACK-'N'-SLASH

Combat plays a small, but vital role in the game. Throughout No Name's travels, he meets various hostile humans and monsters that block his path. Surprisingly, they all seem to be roughly his equal in terms of strength and endurance. These hostile beings provide valuable experience points, and should be dealt with whenever encountered. Druid's real-time combat system includes blocking, fleeing, and different attack angle strategies. These can

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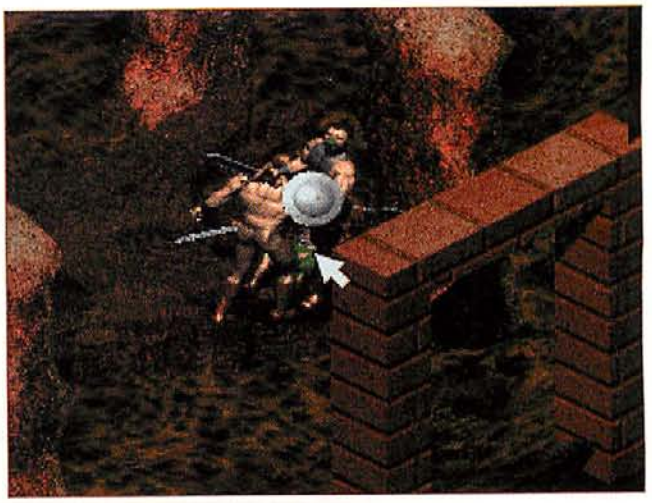
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BALL OF CONFUSION: Sometimes it's hard to tell which limbs belong to you when using DRUID's clunky combat system.

be either hopelessly difficult or childishly simple—depending on whether you learn the right tricks for fighting (see sidebar). Monsters hit fast and hard; once they start hurting No Name, it's all over. Be warned that you will lose some battles, primarily because there is another way to get past these particular opponents.

If you have problems with the combat system, you may find DRUID's magic system more useful than I did. Spells come in handy for healing No Name before battle and for "softening up" his targets before he attacks them. Creatures will not attack you until you step into their "space," so you can lob spells at them to your heart's content. No Name should cast more spells if he has trouble with with a particular opponent. You can either find spells in the manual, or in books and tapestries throughout the game. Elements (water, air, fire, and earth) make up of a majority of the spells. The magic system is simple and intuitive; right-clicking will bring up No Name's magic amulet, featuring four gems to cast element-based spells as well as a central gem for "mind power" spells. Clicking on the elements and the mind gem in the correct order will invoke a spell, which then can then be targeted appropriately.

Although combat and magic make up substantial gameplay, DRUID's substance lies in the the puzzles and storyline. The plot is by no means lucid, but a strong current of intrigue running through the storyline warrants continued play. DRUID's puzzles involve finding objects, using them sensibly, and giving them to interested parties. Unlike many adventure games, puzzles actually contribute to the plot and do not come off as superfluous to gameplay.

DON'T BLINK; YOU MIGHT MISS IT

Like some of Sir-Tech's Wizardry games, DRUID offers multiple endings depending on choices you make late in the game. Unfortunately, these endings are all disappointingly short and uninteresting. In fact, the whole game is on the short side, something that even a nice storyline and lovely graphics can't redeem.

If you pick up DRUID because you are looking for a challenging role-playing game on par with the venerable WIZARDRY and REALMS OF ARKANIA games, you will be disappointed. DRUID is short, pretty, and moderately challenging, but uninspiring combat sequences and the disappointing sound offset an otherwise great interface.

APPEAL: Those intimidated by the richer environment of WIZARDRY and REALMS OF ARKANIA may find this easier to get into (and out of).

PROS: Simple, intuitive magic system; decent storyline with numerous, plot-driven puzzles, multiple endings.

CONS: Painful pixel-hunting required to find many of the game's objects, plus an execrable combat system sap the energy from the story. Having only three save game spots is also a detriment.



Salvaging Combat In DRUID

Without knowledge of the right moves, real-time combat in DRUID can drive even the most tenacious gamer crazy. Here are some combat tips to keep your druid fighting strong.

Always save before you fight!

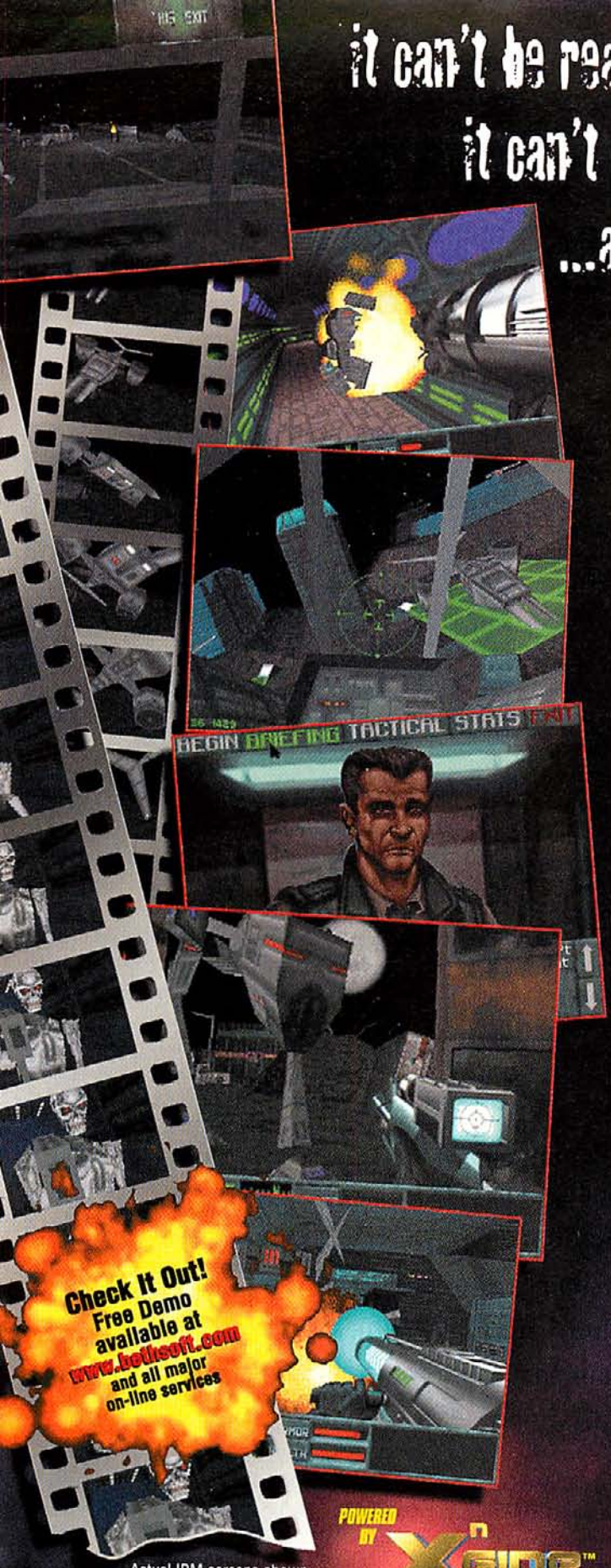
The more experience your druid has, the better. For practice, take advantage of one of the few places in the game where monsters regenerate: on the road to the Archives. After killing the monster guarding this road, leave the area and return to fight it again. You can keep this up until you are satisfied (or until you get bored silly).

Whoever lands the first hit during hand-to-hand combat will most likely win the battle. A successful hit makes the target lose their balance and delays retaliation. Repeated hits will keep your opponent off balance and protect No Name from most attacks.

To ensure the first hit is landed by No Name, click directly on your opponent (to walk up to him) and keep clicking as fast as you can to keep hitting him. The best places to hit your opponent are usually on the front of the legs. However, some battles will require experimentation to determine which mouse-click will connect with the monster. The right place to direct your hits depends on the direction the monster is facing and whether it is standing on an incline or on level ground.

Improve your odds by keeping No Name fully healed and with enough mind points to fight properly. Cast some destructive spells on your foe before closing in for the kill. Remember that there are a few opponents whom you cannot kill including the jailer and some of the guards in the restricted area, do not waste your time fighting them.

it can't be reasoned with,
it can't be bargained with...
...and it absolutely will not stop.



Actual IBM screens shown



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by Allen L. Greenberg



UNWANTED WINDOWS The TV sets, a recurring Ellison theme, let Ellen peek into other characters' adventures. It's either that, or face the yellow she so detests.

During the most bitter "us vs. them" days of the cold war, there was an itch at the back of our collective minds: would the computers, which we were developing to help organize and protect our lives, somehow turn on us and take far more authority than they were every intended to have? Such a computer might be buried deep in another hemisphere, or be as close as the bank around the corner. Arguably the greatest literary realization of those fears is a 1967 short story by Harlan Ellison entitled *I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream*. This Hugo award-winning terror, having been reprinted numerous times in various collections, has finally appeared as a brilliant piece of interactive fiction. In cooperation with the author, Cyberdreams has recently released I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM.

While the background of both the game and the story are the same, the key events of each have very little in common. Three giant computers have been built for military purposes by the Russians, the Chinese and the Americans. The computers drew on their own resources to grow and expand until they interacted and nearly covered the planet. AM was the name of the resultant machine, at first serving as an acrostic for Allied Mastercomputer. Ultimately, however, it was clearly AM, as in *"I think therefore I..."* AM's most prominent feature is its hatred, and to satisfy this emotion, the computer has captured five humans to be kept within its planet-sized entrails. After 109 years of mutilation and abuse, the game and the short story diverge.

Harlan Ellison's original AM is an ultra-sadistic lab technician tampering with a group of mice, almost to the point of death, while keeping them ever-hopeful that a piece of cheese is just around the next corner. It is a horrific roller-coaster ride which comes to a shocking conclusion. In the game, however, AM decides to take his group of humans on a different path. Each of the humans suffers from a private, inner-hell which AM takes great pleasure in externalizing: a hidden secret, guilt or experience that lies buried just beneath the surface of each prisoner's conscious thought, forgotten after 109 years of computerized torture.

> **"Those disgusted with the games designed from Bradbury's and Asimov's works will find I HAVE NO MOUTH immeasurably more satisfying."**

Each character, in turn, is tossed into an artificially created mystery world and promised that they will find something there of tremendous personal value. In reality, each of the worlds is haunted by each prisoner's nightmare. From AM's point of view, there is no reason why each subject should not behave according to its established nature, thus falling victim to its own hell. Your job is to guide each character through his or her own adventure, avoiding the most simple and tempting solutions. Will AM follow through on any of his promises? What is there to be gained or lost by even trying to confront such nightmares and respond appropriately? There is a secret and even a purpose to it all should each of the five come through successfully.

I HAVE NO MOUTH is, therefore, a five-part adventure which may be tackled in



Price: $69.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible, 486DX/33 or better processor, 15 MB hard drive space, 8 MB RAM, 2X CD ROM, SVGA graphics, Sound Blaster or compatible sound card
Protection: None
Publisher: Cyberdreams
Calabasas, CA
(818) 222-9348
Reader Service #: 328

RIPPER

FREE

March 1996

The Ultimate in Interactive Horror



Experience the Technological Event of the Year!

Ripping Detail:
The Gruesome Plot

Evil by Design:
The Design & Production



Shooting the Town:
The Making of Ripper

Starring
Christopher Walken
Karen Allen
Burgess Meredith
John Rhys-Davies

taketwointer

It was a beautiful night in New York, except, of course, for the screaming. After the requisite digital 911 and dispatch routine, the scene becomes sadly familiar. Another mutilated body. Another homicide investigation. Another brutal crime without any clues. A locked door mystery with overtones of the hideous. The landlady, maybe to avoid thinking about the body of the woman, stares at the bloody carpet wondering if the stains are ever going to come out. The RIPPER has struck again.

RIPPER

The Ultimate in Interactive Horror

And over in the corner, looking on in mute horror, stands the crime reporter Quinlan. Some are harder to take than others, even when you have been in the business for a while. Some you know are going to keep you waking up screaming in the middle of the night for the rest of your life, no matter how much work the shrinkers and their high tech probe toys do. You want to think it isn't happening. You look away and look back expecting the body to be gone, the police to have been shadows and the whole thing to have been a nightmare. But no matter how much you work on it, the result is still the same: you keep seeing the face of your girlfriend superimposed over the body on the floor. . .






"With its fresh, fast-paced story, its first rate cast and graphics, RIPPER looks like it could be one of the most provocative and compelling games of the year."

PC Gamer

This is the setup for RIPPER, a new game of interactive horror from Take 2. The player, taking the role of Quinlan—a crime reporter—suddenly finds himself caught up in the most bizarre of possible plots: in the 21st Century it would appear that Jack the RIPPER is stalking the streets of New York. Seemingly unstoppable, he leaves no clues, can get to anyone and leaves behind scenes just as sick and twisted as the originals. Worse, with the police seemingly incapable—or unwilling—to solve the crime, it is up to you to stop the psychotic of the century, or go mad trying.

RIPPER is a full motion video tour-de-force. Over $4 million in the making, with a star studded cast, more than 35 interactive puzzles and combat sequences, a professional production crew and innovative storytelling technology, the final product is a six CD set with over three hours of digitally enhanced full motion video and one of the deepest plots ever seen in an electronic interactive story. 30+ man-years of production time went to making RIPPER the standard against which all others will be measured. And Take 2 relies not only on their talents to bring RIPPER to life, but bring out some of the biggest names in Hollywood to complete the effort. Christopher Walken, Burgess Meredith, Karen Allen, John Rhys-Davies, Jimmy Walker, Tawnee Welch and David Patrick Kelly all lend their considerable acting abilities to the project. Add a soundtrack featuring Blue Oyster Cult and you have a stunning blend of talent and vision that makes RIPPER one of the most complete and engaging interactive experiences ever created.

In this special supplement, we are going to cover every detail of RIPPER. From the initial design to the month of shooting in a New York studio to the details of the programming; no stone will be left unturned. So read on to get the ultimate inside look at the creation of pure horror from the ground up.













Circle Reader Service #154

Ripping Detail:
A Look at The Plot of Ripper

As befits a game with over 30 man-years in the development, the RIPPER storyline is as complex as a fractal image: the deeper you go, the more complicated it gets.
The game starts in 2046 with a murder hideous enough to make even jaded New Yorkers take notice.



The body of the female victim has been eviscerated with surgical precision and her internal organs spread over the crime scene. As Jake Quinlan, a crime reporter for the Virtual Herald, the player is in the thick of it from the beginning.
But the chances of this being a singular, psychotic event drop to zero when Quinlan starts getting letters from the perpetrator. The letters lend an even more bizarre twist to the senseless killing. The murder is copying the pattern of the most famous serial killer in history: Jack the RIPPER.



As the murders and letters continue, the danger comes home to Quinlan, in the form of a letter from the RIPPER naming Catherine Powell, Quinlan's co-worker and girl friend, as the next victim.
Despite the warning, the RIPPER still manages to get to Powell, but doesn't get to finish his job. Powell is alive, but in a deep coma.
As if things weren't bad enough for Jake, detective Vince Magnotta (Christopher Walken) moves Jake up to the prime suspect for the murders. After all, the crimes sure sell digital papers, don't they?
It becomes obvious that Quinlan must find out the identity of the RIPPER himself and stop the evil. But hunting a psychotic murderer does have its inherent dangers, and Quinlan must not only clear himself, but also avoid becoming the RIPPER's next victim.
Solving the murders isn't going to be easy, even armed with this much information. It turns out to be impossible to discover the answer to such simple questions as the weapon the RIPPER is using, much less how he can attack and kill his victims and leave no trace except macabre remains.





"If there's a right way to do Full Motion Video this is it."

Next Generation

"RIPPER...threatens to upstage Phantasmagoria as a purveyor of adult content in games."

PC Entertainment

What strange connection do twin brothers Covington and Hamilton Wofford (Burgess Meredith) have to the unfolding drama? How can a killer leave no traces in a futuristic world of advanced criminology? The questions and byzantine twists keep piling up as Quinlan moves deeper into the mystery.

Before things are over, Quinlan will have to track the killer and the clues all over New York, and all over cyberspace, to bring together the pieces he needs to finally end the madness once and for all.

The final scenes, played out in a cyberspace reconstruction of the historical RIPPER's stomping grounds, Whitechapel, will be a fight to the death. It is up to the player to make sure that the death involved is that of the RIPPER and not Quinlan.

Using their innovative act sequencing and game engine technology, Take 2 ensures that solving RIPPER will be a non-stop thrill-packed journey into horror. Unlike some games, there is no break in the action of RIPPER to pull a player out of the reality of the game. Movement is seamless, and by using their on the fly video rescaling, puzzles are fully integrated with the rendered backgrounds, not separate scenes.

RIPPER also makes the horror last by having four different ending sequences in which the identity of the RIPPER changes. To do this, Take 2 has used their act arrangement to give an overall background common to all the murders first. Then, in the later acts, the clues leading to the murder are presented. So the different endings aren't just "tacked on" but instead integrate perfectly with the preceding sections of the game, giving a whole new twist to the mystery.

With an all star cast to bring the script to life and music featuring Blue Oyster Cult, RIPPER promises to be not only a good game, but a good work of interactive fiction as well.









For those with a mind for the macabre, RIPPER will be the interactive event of the year.

RIPPER shows signs of being the most innovative piece of software in years."

Computer Game Review









Evil By Design: The Design and Production of RIPPER

Ambition was a key word from the beginning of the RIPPER design process.
"What we wanted to do was to make a full motion interactive game with a real plot. We wanted to achieve a game with the depth of a novel. A game for thinking adults," says F.J. Lennon, Vice President of Development.
However, to achieve this goal took much more work than expected.

Take 2 needed to utilize a non-linear plot in the game. While linear plots make a game easier to write, they detract from the gaming experience because characters cannot wander freely and act spontaneously. But the problem is that events must occur in some order. When scripting a scene for actors, you must know what has happened up to that point.
To solve the problem, Take 2 broke the game down into acts. Each act contains a number of puzzles that the player can solve in a varying order. But the players must solve the puzzles in order to proceed to the next act.
With the matter of linearity solved, the designers still had a tough road ahead of them.
While the veterans in Take 2 have designed numerous interactive games, working with live actors and the requirements of the video medium requires time to feel comfortable.
"We learned with previous titles that live actors take much more care. You can have these huge blocks of dialog that look fine in a text game, but if an actor tries to say them they just don't work. With FMV in RIPPER it was even more pronounced. A lot of the information gets conveyed by looks and acting talent as opposed to the actual spoken lines," says Ryan Brant, Take 2's CEO.
The team also worked to integrate elements of the actual historical RIPPER crimes into their cyberpunk recreation. For instance, the real Jack sent letters to newspapers boasting of his crimes, and the Ripper does the same in the game. "He would start every letter with "from Hell" and would refer to the newspaper columnist as "boss". We used these elements in our letters," says Lennon.
The writing and programming team spent three months designing RIPPER. Next, the video was shot, and the programming team integrated the video with the game engine they had been developing.
"We spent a lot of time figuring out how people really move—calculating how many frames of video actually equaled a distance walked in the real world and using a formula to integrate that into our engine. That way, the movement looked like it does in the real world," says Chris Short, RIPPER's Production Manager.
The production team also closely examined the mechanics of human movement to see how a person's eyes and head track. Then they built this into their engine so that when a person turns a corner, for example, the camera angle changes to simulate the way people move their head and eyes in that situation.
A great deal of attention focused on ensuring that slower computers can still get the full effect of RIPPER.
"We designed an approximation curve

"For sheer star quality, it's hard to surpass RIPPER from Take2."

Computer Gaming World













for the video speed of the machine to run smoothly on a 486-50 with a double speed CD-ROM instead of just on Pentium systems," Short explains.
These touches give RIPPER incredibly smooth and realistic movement that no other FMV game has ever had. "It has taken a lot of work," says Take 2 President Mark Seremet. "But when your goal is to redefine the level of the interactive game, you know it isn't going to be easy."

Shooting The Town: The Making of RIPPER's Video Segments.

In contrast to a traditional stage with props and backdrops, the RIPPER set is totally barren. A bank of powerful workstations sit along one wall manned by Take 2 artists. This combination of human talent and computer power produces all the backgrounds and settings for each scene on the fly.
Here's how: The walls of the set are painted a special pigment, called Chroma Blue. The color is then coded into the specialized software and hardware; anywhere the computers find that color in a video stream, they replace it with computer graphics. Thus the actors appear as live video, but everything else in a scene is the computer overlay.
While this might seem more difficult for the talent, Walken and his fellow actors maintain that the differences are fairly small. The Take 2 staff, however, endured a greuling work schedule.
"When you only have some of the big name actors for a couple of days, each day can run up to 20 hours. It's grueling," says Mike Snyder, one of Take 2's Senior Artists.
Although this is their first complete full motion shoot, Take 2 paid to ensure it was done right.
"These guys know what they are doing. We didn't want to go the route we have seen in some other games where the designers tried to run everything themselves. It is worth it to pay the money to get the professionals. These people know what it takes to produce perfect results," says President Mark Seremet.
Working with professionals does have another up side—getting to meet and work with big name stars.
"Walken was incredible. The man can act anything. Because of a short prep time, he was reading his lines off a Teleprompter and it sounded like he lived the part," says John Antinori, one of Take 2's Senior Writers.
"And David Patrick Kelly. The guy is just as intense in real life as he is acting. In between shots he would walk in these tight circles in the back corner, muttering to himself, to keep his intensity up. Of course, I was kind of afraid to go near him," Lennon laughs. "Burgess Meredith was also great. The guy is 70-something, still out there shooting for 12 hours, the longest he worked at a stretch since "Rocky", but he kept in there," says Jack Snyder, Senior Artist.
While the shooting was expensive and grueling for the Take 2 team, it no doubt produced the excellent results they expected: the finished footage for the game is comparable to a movie or high quality television show.
It might be hard to get a game that has the impact of a feature film, but Take 2 is certainly giving it a shot.

"RIPPER will not be another one of those dreary interactive movies that turn out to be as interactive as a tumble dryer."

Computer Player



Circle Reader Service #154


TAKE 2
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Playstation™ and the Playstation logos are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment, Inc. Apple and the Apple logo are trademarks of Apple Computer, Inc.
PlayStation
PC-CD
Starring
Christopher Walken
Karen Allen
Burgess Meredith
John Rhys-Davies
RIPPER
You're next.
Visit us on America Online using Keyword: Take 2; or on Compuserve using GO Gamapub; or check out our website at http://www.westol.com/~taketwo

any order and combined with a special sixth endgame which can only be attempted after the first five have reached a satisfactory conclusion. One of the torturees is Gorrister, a darkly sober individual who holds himself responsible for his beloved wife's institutionalization. He has attempted suicide many times, only to be rescued by AM. Another is Benny, a former soldier who led an allegedly satisfying career. AM has twisted both his mind and his body on various occasions. Ted fancies himself a young, handsome stud, deserving of special treatment. While AM has, for some reason, resisted destroying the youth's good looks, he tortures Ted with accusations of fraudulence, threatening to tell the others about Ted's less than spectacular life.

Ellen is the only female of the group, and a very talented computer technician. She cut short her own career at one point, and never revealed why. AM finds it easy to torture the woman by keeping her in a coffin-like prison with shades of the color yellow. Finally, there is Nimdok. He is a well-educated man and a Jewish survivor of the Nazi concentration camps. He remembers very little of his past, although AM seems to enjoy exposing small pieces of it which, for some reason, causes Nimdok great agony.



SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD Benny comes face to face with his past, as his victims call to him from the grave.

insists upon. As a result, Those disgusted with the games designed from Bradbury's and Asimov's works will find I HAVE NO MOUTH immeasurably more satisfying. (And Harlan will be thrilled that our Editor-in-Chief may eat his words suggesting that Ellison was such a "Luddite" that he wouldn't have any more to do with the project than the miniscule two weeks to which he had originally agreed.) Harlan's voice may also be heard, at the risk of shattering sub-standard sound cards, as the voice of AM, with just a tip o' the hat to *The Wizard Of Oz*.

The remaining cast puts in a satisfying performance, and the sound effects and music score are also quite effective. The graphics are slightly gritty, as one might expect deep in the bowels of the computer, though perhaps a bit stiff in places. Gameplay is mouse-controlled, using characters, objects and locations on the graphic screen in addition to a small collection of verbs.

While gameplay in I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM may be standard, every over-used plot-device has been refreshingly removed. There are no arcade sequences, no insipid prophesies, no cross-country Federal Express missions and, most importantly, there are no mazes. The game judges you strongly on the morality of your actions. We are dealing with genuine emotions such as pain and hate, rather than some cartoon caricature of them. It is a good idea to invest some thought before speaking in a conversation, and those players with a bit of cultural and historical knowledge will probably be at a slight advantage. I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM is a demanding game, which rewards as much as it demands.

"REFORMED" LUDDITE

Harlan Ellison's fingerprints are to be found nearly everywhere on I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM, indicative of the level of creative control Harlan

I Have No Hints...



Benny makes it very obvious that he doesn't care for certain charity-dependent people. Spend a lot of time with them anyway, and possibly help them out.

Ellen is more afraid of her surroundings than she is willing to admit. Don't give up on the grail: It's far more important than Ellen guesses. Out of sight, out of mind.





Gorrister is sailing aboard a zeppelin, and not quite sure why. He should search the craft from one end to the other to find something which belongs to him. Then, it's time to land.

Nimdok has lost his memory of his experiences in the concentration camp. Listen to everyone, they know a lot about you. However, hide certain items you find which might damage your reputation.





Ted claims to be in love, but is he really? Make sure honor and chivalry are not forgotten.

APPEAL: Not the best to try as a first adventure, though anyone who likes depth of storytelling should consider this game. Even without copious gore, some of the material may be too intense for children.

PROS: Outstanding story which breaks free from every over-used adventure plot device. It really *is* Ellison.

CONS: The often stiff graphics are inadequate to convey the depths of the story.

CG RATED

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

This Old House

The Sequel To THE 7TH GUEST Strikes Perilously Close To Midnight

by Arinn Dembo



WELL-SCRUBBED 11TH HOUR's crisp "coffee-table" graphic quality is in league with MYST and BURIED IN TIME.

Every town has a haunted house. Generations of kids pass on rumors about what goes on inside, double-daring their friends to go explore it—just once! Parents issue warnings about broken glass, rusty nails, and squatting derelicts, but fear is always a better deterrent than common sense. In 11TH HOUR, The abandoned, decaying Stauf mansion is back and scarier than ever; the place that every kid dreads to pass on the street. As the game begins, a rash of brutal murders in the town nearby raises the question of whether there could be a link to the old Stauf place's infamous and horrible past.

7TH GUEST veterans should have no trouble finding their way around the house using the same first-person perspective and mouse-driven interface. However, you now explore the house through the eyes of a grown man, well over six feet tall. Besides an additional secret room, and the removal of the top floor from 7TH GUEST's explosive climax, Stauf mansion's floor plan remains the same.

As in 7TH GUEST, you must solve puzzles to unlock and explore the various rooms. But now, the rooms contain dozens of beautifully rendered objects and paintings instead of bare walls. Of course, they serve a purpose; Trilobyte added a treasure hunt to the game. Players must solve riddles associated with each item in the house. Upon solving a riddle, players learn what object to access next. Touching the correct object rewards you with either a film or animation clip which reveals part of the story and moves you one step closer to victory.

The riddles add to gameplay, but sometimes needlessly increase 11TH HOUR's difficulty level. Occassionally, inelegant and illogically constructed word problems will bury an answer under several layers of awkward metaphors. Fortunately, the game provides the player with a handy hint system called a "game book," a hand-held PC that provides hints and maps and displays the game's film sequences. The gamebook keeps gameplay flowing by smoothly incorporating the hint system into the interface—a good feature in any game and especially necessary in a horror game, where frustration can cancel out suspense.



Price: $69.95
System Requirements: 486-66 or better processor (Pentium *strongly* recommended), Win 95 or DOS 5.0, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 4 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM, any major sound card, mouse.
Protection: None
Designer: Trilobyte
Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
Irvine, CA
(800) 874-4607, (714) 833-8710
Reader Service #: 329

AND NOW, THE REST OF THE STORY

Trilobyte produced an incredibly slick title. Few will find fault with 11TH HOUR's beautiful SVGA graphics, exceptional sound, and top notch animation. The flawlessly rendered chrome would be enough for many gamers.

11TH HOUR's problems fall into two categories: demanding system requirements and lackluster script. The former issue bears only minor mention; 11TH HOUR gets cranky if you don't have a state-of-the-art system. Unlike similar titles, the game's recommendation for a Pentium with at least 8 MB of RAM cannot be taken lightly. It will have trouble running on anything less than a 486x66 with 8 MB, a double-speed CD-ROM and a recent 2 MB graphic card. The older your equipment, the more likely the game will lock up or not run at all.

Despite being more involved and adult-oriented than 7TH GUEST, weaknesses in the script hamper 11TH HOUR. Carl Denning, anchorman for TV's "Case Unsolved," ventures into the mansion to find his producer and ex-lover, Robin Morales. Robin recently disappeared while researching a story on the mansion. In the course of his search, Carl must solve clues about her disappearance. The game displays his discoveries through film clips which play on the game book. While it's satisfying and entertaining to watch these long cinematic sequences after you guide Carl through piecing together a clue, players will find his real motivation suspect.

Not to nit-pick, but our hero is a bit of a bastard. The game establishes only an anemic connection between Carl's strength of character and his struggle to find Robin. You will question his scruples during the finale, where one crucial choice decides her fate. I won't spoil the ending, but none of the three possible conclusions correspond well to Carl's original goal. Sympathizing with him may not be easy, but at least he is noble enough to rescue her from Stauf's Roach Motel.

continue on page 133 ▶▶▶▶

After you crash

We simply hose the

pulpy red mess off the dash

and give the car

to the next guy.



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ESRB ADVISORY
VIOLENCE
Cartoon violence. Damage to realistic objects

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Circle Reader Service #210

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Rainforests Revisited

Michael Crichton Plunders His Own Plot Devices For Viacom Newmedia's CONGO

by Charles Ardai



From the mini-movies in the corner of the comm device to the lushness of the rushing jungle river, CONGO is slick, cinematic...and very predictable.

Some years ago, before he was the Jurassic-scale multi-millionaire he is today, Michael Crichton dabbled in computer game design. The result was AMAZON, a graphic adventure for the Commodore 64 about a team of researchers in the South American jungle who have been mysteriously assaulted and the operative—you—who is sent from the home office to investigate. By the time he designed AMAZON, Crichton had already written *Congo*: the novel, but *Congo*: The Movie was not yet a glimmer in someone's eye, and CONGO: The Game of the Movie wasn't even the glimmer of a glimmer.

So, was AMAZON ripping off CONGO then, or is CONGO ripping off AMAZON now? Perhaps this is appears to be a metaphysical question akin to, "Was I a man dreaming I was a butterfly or am I now a butterfly dreaming that I am a man?" Sure, other successful pop artists re-use material (Sting comes to mind), but I think the question actually speaks to the problem at the heart of CONGO.

LUSH FORESTS

The game is spectacular to look at, packed to its eyebrows with visual sparkle and effects that make you gurgle with delight. For example, it's the first game I know that uses morphing effectively—and that's just on the main menu! But under the sparkle, is there anything to chew on?

Very little that wasn't there back in 1984 is the answer. It's a different jungle; you're hunting exceptionally pure diamonds instead of emeralds; the Edgar Rice Burroughs-ish lost city is called "Zinj" instead of "Chak"; you link to the communications satellite with your "Travicom workstation" instead of your "NSRT field computer"; but you're still poking through oversized fronds, dodging poisoned darts, eluding snakes and apes and other beasties, and generally carrying on like a techno-savvy version of Indiana Jones.

What's wrong with that? Nothing, especially when you consider that essentially zero percent of today's gamers have ever even heard of AMAZON, much less played it. (If they've heard of the Commodore 64, I'm happy.) But I can't help wondering why it is that originality is in such short supply among game designers these days. AMAZON wasn't exactly fresh material even a dozen years ago, and it's no fresher today. It's hard to find fault with the storytelling of a writer as successful as Michael Crichton, but I'll tell you, it would be nice if with all his money he could buy himself a new plot once in a while.

FROM ZAIRE TO ETERNITY

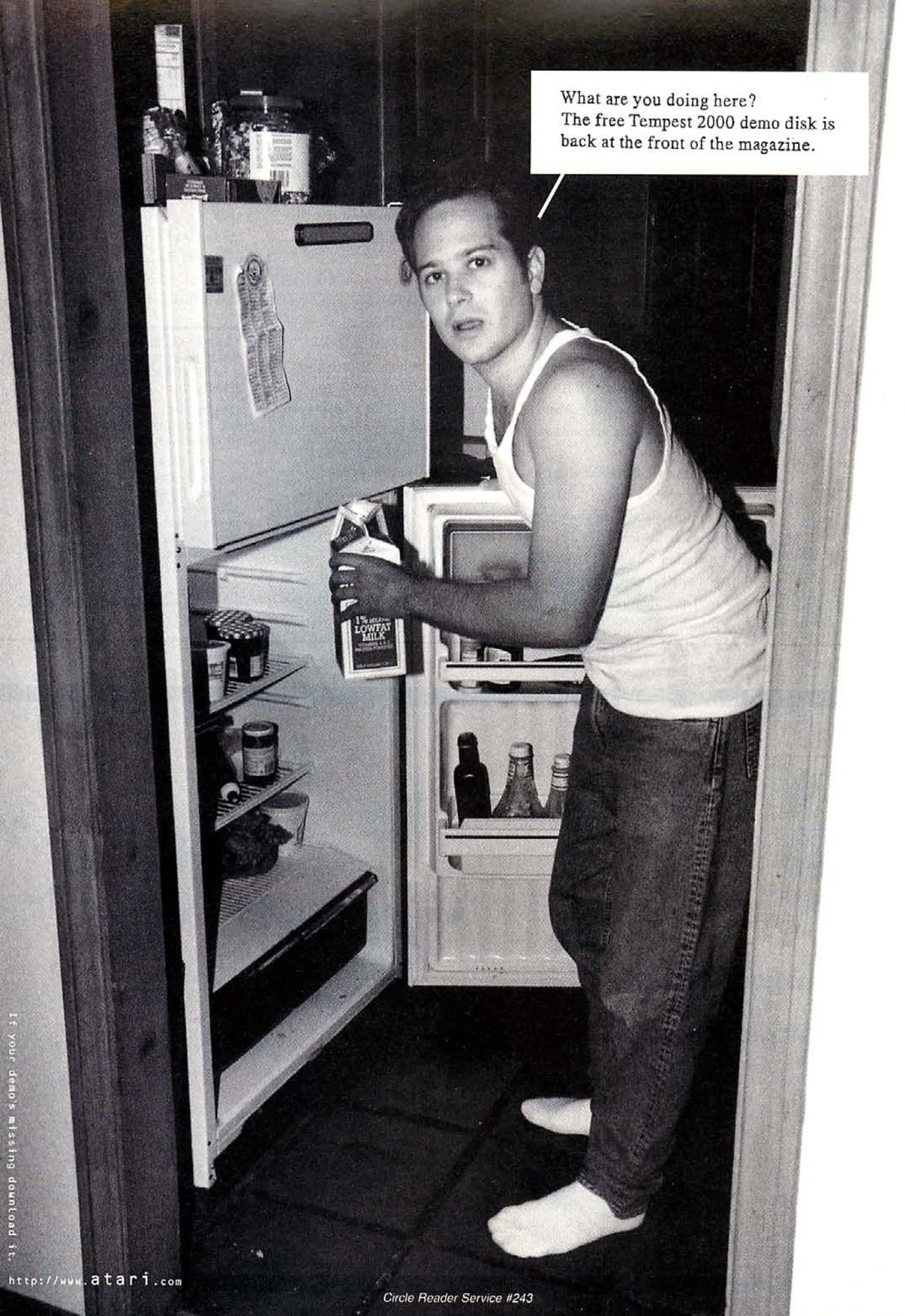
CONGO's basic story will be familiar if you saw the movie in the theater or on video, or even if you only saw the trailer for the movie. (If you didn't even see that, it's conveniently provided for you on the CD-ROM.) It seems that there exists a super-high grade of diamond that can be used to make either great weapons or great communications devices, and this diamond can only be found in the untamed jungles of Zaire. One team of jungle-tamers sent out by Travicom, a greedy multinational corporation (if that's not redundant), has been lost. The follow-up team appears to have been waylaid as well, possibly by uncommonly large and hostile apes. Now, it's up to you to bring them—the team, the diamonds, not the apes—back alive.

Doing so requires you to diddle with the most basic sorts of adventure game puzzles (and I don't just mean mazes,

continue on page 132 ▸▸▸▸



Price: $59.95
System Requirements: 486-66 or better PC processor, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics (LocalBus), 1 MB hard drive space, Windows 3.1 or Win 95, 2 x CD-ROM, Sound Blaster and compatibles, mouse.
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Illumina Productions
Publisher: Viacom New Media
New York, NY
(800) 469-2539, (708) 520-4440
Reader Service #: 330



If your demo's missing download it.
http://www.atari.com

Circle Reader Service #243

▸▸▸▸ continued from page 130

though a maze is, alas, part of the package). Didn't you have to find your way across a gorge at the start of Sierra's seminal WIZARD AND THE PRINCESS? Didn't you have to raft a river in Infocom's ZORK I? Well, here you'll have to do it again.

Granted, the text-only rafting in ZORK I lacked the in-your-face frisson of CONGO's virtual reality-style goggle display, which lets you see the oncoming rapids, the rocks that will capsize you if you're not careful, and all the plants whipping by your face. WIZARD AND THE PRINCESS offered line drawings where CONGO offers a realistic stone-and-soil chasm.

I admit that I found myself so caught up in the environment that I didn't even mind the typically awkward movement scheme. (You click left and right to turn in place, then forward to walk. This means that going back one step requires three moves.) Later, when the gee-whiz gadgets Travicom packed into my workstation—a radiation scanner, a photo-enhancer, a cool mapping and tracking system—came into play, I got into the spirit of the thing, studying the fictitious workstation interface as intently as if thereafter I'd be working on the thing from nine to five every day.

But my willing suspension of disbelief was sorely tested the hokey familiarity of the game's events. There's a snake on a branch overhead! There's a booby-trapped door with ancient carvings on it! There's a sassy female scientist who mouths off about having a "cowboy" like you assigned to cover her backside, but then calls for help when the uber-gorillas attack! It's all professionally done, but it's paint-by-numbers: this patch red, that patch blue; this patch gorillas, that patch booby traps.

CONGO—LINE

By the time you get to the end of this game, there is no question that your adrenaline will be flowing. As our giddier film critics like to say, CONGO is a roller-coaster ride. I'll even escalate the praise: it's one hell of a good-looking roller-coaster ride.

But we've all ridden this ride before and know its dips and turns too well. It's hard to get too excited about what's basically a fresh coat of paint.

▸APPEAL: Mainly for fans of the film or novel, or those who don't mind a rehash of familiar adventure themes.

▸PROS: Slick production values and lots of animation bring the jungle and its menaces to life.

▸CONS: We know the menaces too well to be scared by them, the puzzles too well to be challenged by them, and the story too well to be wholly sucked in.

CG RATED



▸▸▸▸ continued from page 128

Even the best conclusion won't reward your efforts to solve the puzzles. Adding insult to injury, Trilobyte's sneaky programmers made it impossible to save your game just prior to the fatal choice! At best, you can save one puzzle and one riddle before the end. Also, the final puzzle becomes progressively more difficult each time you go back and attempt to choose a different ending.

Experienced gamers will find these "plot protection" devices annoying. You get the feeling that Trilobyte used them as a ruse to distract players from 11TH HOUR's weak ending, but it only makes things worse. It also smacks of punishment—"You made the wrong choice, now you'll pay for a second chance." This is rude to do to someone who just invested sixty dollars and a minimum of 20-30 hours in your product. If you don't want us to check out all three endings, just give us one!

CASE UNSOLVED

A less-than-satisfying conclusion won't trouble the majority of the game-buying public. 11TH HOUR is light on gameplay and heavy on Hollywood influences and adult themes—if you aren't interested in that combination, you might want to pass it up. On the other hand, gamers who enjoy puzzles, riddles and light board games will delight in 11TH HOUR's elegant presentation of such games as Reversi, Connect Four and Pente. Gamers who enjoy high-budget interactive fiction will not be disappointed by the production values, and virtually anyone will enjoy the SVGA graphics and superb animation.

Gamers who value gameplay more than flash—or who think that puzzles should have *something* to do with the plot of an adventure game—will have to think twice before re-visiting this old house.



BORED GAMES The clever, but often irrelevant puzzles of 11TH HOUR may interfere with your sense of immersion in the game.

▸APPEAL: If you loved 7TH GUEST, this game looks and sounds better.

▸PROS: SVGA graphics, great music, good full-motion video.

▸CONS: High system demands, weak ending, and lighter-than-average gameplay. It can be a real bear getting the game to run.

CG RATED

"...my vote for best game of the show..." -Computer Game Review

"This already looks like the best game of the year." -Strategy Plus

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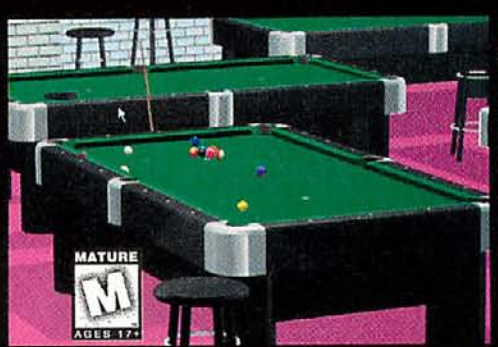


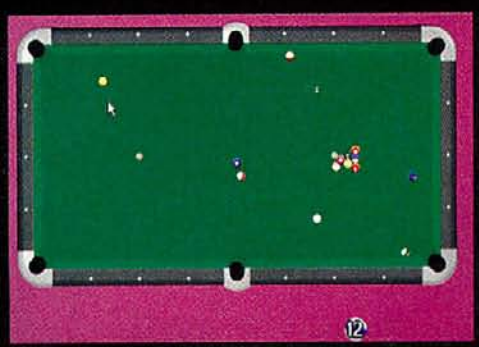




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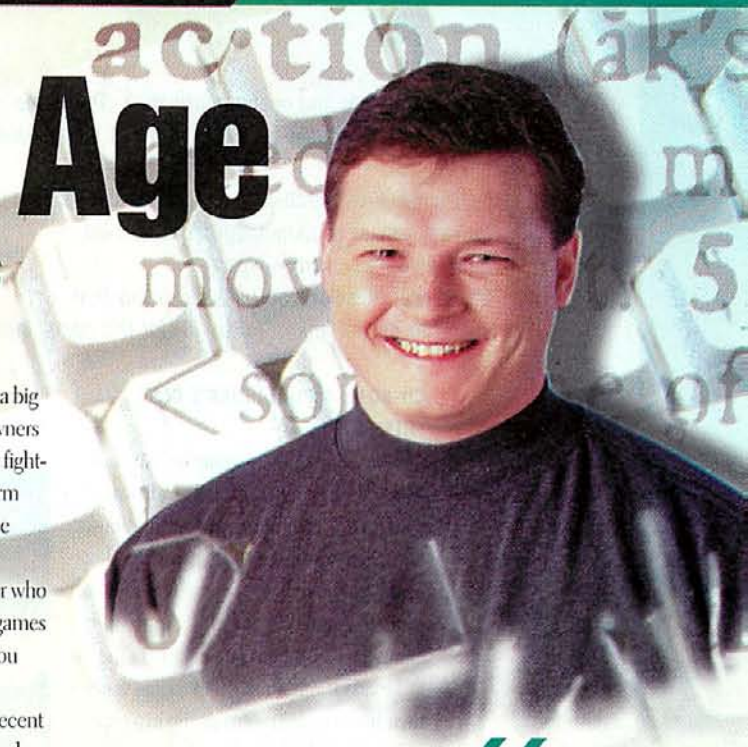
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Circle Reader Service #133

Coming of Age

The Why And The How Of The PC Market's Arcade Action Explosion



If you're an avid fan of arcade games, you've undoubtedly noticed that the PC gaming market is often found lacking when it comes to traditional action-arcade games. Aside from the notable exception of DOOM and its ubiquitous entourage of "me-too!" clones, action gaming on the PC has been forced to take a back seat to other game genres. Flight sims, strategy games and wargames consistently grab the headlines and garner the most coverage. But while PCs may indeed rule the roost when it comes to these genres, coin-operated arcade machines and next generation game consoles reign supreme when it comes to action in the tradition of STREET FIGHTER, VIRTUA RACING and MORTAL KOMBAT. Sega's coin-op VIRTUA FIGHTER 2 soundly pummels the PC versions of FX FIGHTER and SAVAGE WARRIORS, while arcade-to-PC conversions of MORTAL KOMBAT 3 and PRIMAL RAGE come up short when compared to their Sony PlayStation counterparts.

Fortunately, this sorry state of PC action gaming is about to change in a big way. Over the next year or so, PC owners will witness a flood of arcade-quality fighting games, shoot-em-ups and platform games to rival the best offerings at the arcade or on competing console machines. If you're the type of gamer who longs for quality PC conversions of games like TEKKEN and VIRTUA FIGHTER, you won't have to wait much longer. Cartridge game developers see the recent surge in PC gaming through greenback-colored glasses, and coin-op manufacturers are beginning to realize that the PC market holds a large number of game-hungry action fans.

There are a number of reasons behind the impending boom in action gaming, but four central issues seem to be driving growth: the increasing size of the PC gaming market; the arrival of a game-friendly operating system in Windows 95; the ascendancy of CD-ROM as the primary means of distribution; and the advent of accelerated 3-D graphics cards for the PC.

BIGGER IS BETTER

The days of the PC gaming market being an "also ran" when compared to the massive cartridge market are long over. The PC market is bursting at the seams, with thousands of new computer gamers being added to the fold weekly. According to data collected by the Software Publisher's Association (http://www.spa.org) sales of PC entertainment software have been absolutely booming over the past 12 months, making the market simply too lucrative for cartridge game developers to overlook.

> "Action gamers need no longer feel like the forgotten orphans of the computer gaming industry."

WINDOWS 95 = GAMES!

Love it or hate it, Windows 95 is selling like suntan lotion at a nudist colony. It may be less than the perfect operating system for gaming, but it is still a colossal step in the right direction. And the powerful tools included in the Windows 95 Game Software Development Kit (SDK) make games easier to develop and support, reducing the conversion costs of porting arcade and console games to the PC. The first Windows 95-specific game releases may have been a bit lackluster, but rest assured—bigger and better games are in the wings. Naysayers can grump about Win 95 all they want, but it won't change the fact that the game industry is going for Bill's baby in a big way.

INSIDE ACTION

- In addition to adding Crystal Dynamix' GEX to their gaming stable, Microsoft has joined forces with a number of other noteworthy action game developers. Terminal Reality (developer of FURY3 and TERMINAL VELOCITY) and Rainbow America (THE HIVE) have also signed agreements with Microsoft to produce games for Windows 95.
- Sega's newly formed SegaPC division is gearing up to port several popular Genesis and Saturn games to the PC during 1996. Look for PANZER DRAGOON first, followed by an impressive list of high-powered ports from the Sega Saturn.
- Need game cheats? If you do, your next stop on the Internet should be the Games Cheats & Info List, written by Lam Chi-fung (cflam@hk.super.net). This is a huge list of game cheats and hints, filled with all sorts of

JEFF JAMES

INSIDE ACTION

meaty game info and useful information. The Game Cheats & Info List can be found at any of the following ftp sites:
ftp://ftp.gmd.de/if-archive/solutions/non-IF/cheatlam.txt
ftp://wcl-l.bham.ac.uk/pub/djh/faqs/cheat.list
http://www.panix.com/~viper/
http://www.xmission.com/~rstulce/index.htm
Thanks to Kevin Rank of Boise, ID, for this handy info.

CD-ROM: A PUBLISHER'S BEST FRIEND

Now that the PC gaming industry has adopted CD-ROM as the de facto standard for entertainment software distribution, many cartridge-based game developers see the market as "safe" to port their wares to. Game developers in the console camp have historically been leery of the PC market, certain that they would watch their hard-earned profits dry up in a piracy-prone market based on easily reproducible floppy disks. Since the software shipped on most CDs is usually large enough to make illegal copying impractical, the threat of software piracy has been greatly reduced. Factor in the lower cost and greater reliability of the CD medium, and game developers have yet more reasons to support the burgeoning PC CD-ROM entertainment market.

HARDWARE HEAVEN

If you've ever compared BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN on the Sony PlayStation to the leading beat 'em ups on the PC, (FX FIGHTER and MORTAL KOMBAT 3, to be specific) you'll agree that high-end console machines have a headlock on the fighting game market. Most of that superiority is largely due to the advanced graphics hardware standard on every Sony PlayStation, Sega Saturn and 3DO machine available. Moving complex texture maps about the screen in 16-bit color at 30 frames per second is easy for the PSX and the Saturn, but it can bring even the fastest Pentium to its knees.

However, with the impending arrival of dedicated graphic accelerator cards from Creative Labs, Diamond and Philips, the PC can finally blast bits with the best of the console crowd. Just as the venerable Amiga computer proved nearly a decade ago, having a dedicated graphics co-processor to munch pixels and bitplanes translates into faster animation, more colors, higher resolution and—big shock—better games. Teamed with Microsoft's Direct3D programming specs, this influx of accelerated video cards will allow game developers to produce breakthrough games with millions of colors, multiple bitplanes and silky smooth animation.



VIRTUA REALITY Can gamers expect to play console-quality action games like VIRTUA FIGHTER on the PC? You bet.

THE FUTURE

All of these factors are creating a strong inducement for action game developers to dive into the PC gaming market, and they're already flocking to the PC in droves. Sega's SegaPC division (http://www.segaoa.com/) has released PC ports of ECCO THE DOLPHIN, TOMCAT ALLEY and COMIX ZONE, while a drop-dead gorgeous PC version of VIRTUA FIGHTER REMIX is currently being bundled with Diamond Multimedia's (http://www.diamondmm.com/) Diamond Edge 3D graphics card. Sony released DESTRUCTION DERBY for the PC and PlayStation almost simultaneously, with PC versions of WARHAWK, CRAZY IVAN and other titles only months away. Atari recently formed Atari Interactive, a new division with the sole purpose of producing games for the PC and other platforms, leading off with a PC version of TEMPEST 2000. Even Microsoft is wading into the fray, joining forces with console game developer Crystal Dynamics to bring the best-selling GEX to Windows 95.

So there you have it—PC action gamers will no longer have to feel like the neglected stepchildren of the computer gaming industry. The first few releases of this tidal wave of action games may fall short of expectations, but the long-term outlook for the PC action gamer is a bright one. You'll undoubtedly hear some noise from critics, prophesizing that the arrival of games like VIRTUA FIGHTER REMIX on the PC is a sure-fire sign that the PC market is one step away from mass-market mediocrity. Granted, some of these new action games will be more marketing hype than playable substance (the same holds true for many games on the strategy front as well), but one fact is clear: the PC gaming crowd has reached "market maturity", and there is more than enough room to accommodate fans of all game genres.



HAWKEYE Look for a PC version of WARHAWK, a best-selling Sony PlayStation title, to hit the shelves soon.

CG TIPS!

If the on-screen adversaries in Activision's EARTHWORM JIM (for Windows 95) have you eating topsoil on a regular basis, there's nothing like a good batch of cheat codes to even the odds. Here are a collection of keywords to help you give Professor Monkey-for-a-Head and Queen Slug-for-a-Butt a righteous bootkick in their collective keisters. To activate any of the cheat codes listed, simply type them in during play.

hatman—Transforms Jim into a white pencil sketch.
iddqd—Displays a picture of the EWJ programmers and prints "Nice try! This isn't Doom."
idkfa—Displays a picture of the EWJ beta testers.
itsawonderful—Gives Jim an extra life.
onandonandon—Gives player the maximum number of continues.
popquizhotshot—Maxes out normal gun with 1000 shots.
slaughterhouse—Allows you to jump to any of the five first levels.

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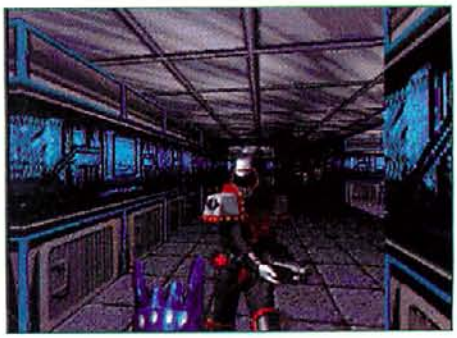
Circle Reader Service #178

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

The Hero And The Horror

CYBERMAGE Delivers Excellent 3-D Action, But Hero Worship Is Held To A Minimum

by Martin E. Cirulis



SNIFF THE GLOVE Your mystical "mang" powers increase and diversify as you gain energy, providing you with an arsenal at your fingertips.

Computer games are admirably capable of handling genres from sports to fantasy role-playing, but there is one small branch of popular North American culture that seems to continually slip through the fingers of designers: comic-book superheroes. Whether it is the dismal experiments in computerized comics performed every two or three years, or the superhero RPG's that never seem to make it off the drawing board, there appears to be some great difficulty in translating the tough-guys-in-tights concept to the ol' chip machine. In fact, superhero computer games have only achieved a modicum of success when they pastiche the form, as in last year's SUPERHERO LEAGUE OF HOBOKEN.

In a brave attempt to break out of this trend of banality (if delivery schedules are to be believed), 1996 will be the year this industry takes a real stab at producing "serious" comic book computer games. At least three major companies will have titles revolving around men and women with powers beyond that of puny mortals. Always one to set the trend instead of follow it, Origin is first out of the chute with their cyberpunk-esque CYBERMAGE: DARKLIGHT AWAKENING which asks the musical question, "Do you have what it takes to be a Superl-lero?!"

Well, maybe you do and maybe you don't, but I can't really say that there is much in CYBERMAGE that made me feel like I was wearing lycra (or whatever superhero clothing is made from) tights.

SECRET ORIGINS, OF A SORT...

Your first clue you won't be joining the Justice League any time soon is your place of birth—or rebirth, as it is. There's no rocket in a Kansas cornfield, no glowing ring of emerald power lying around, and you definitely are not on Paradise Island. Instead, you stumble out of a healing tube with little memory and a body filled with strange new abilities. You soon realize that you are a test subject rescued from the hallowed halls of death by a mysterious cat-hybrid scientist, who has fused you with the exotic DarkLight gem by stuffing it into your forehead. Clad in futuristic battle armor and warned by a dwarven lab tech, you must escape the compromised base and flee into the sewers.

From the Sewers you make your way into the Slums, acquainting yourself with both a strange decaying Earth and your weird new powers, which primarily involve absorbing the spirits of the newly deceased as an energy source (am I the only one who finds this concept a little icky?) and spewing them back out in the form of various long-range energy attacks. Yes, it sounds a bit less wholesome than gaining super-speed by being bathed in random lightening-charged chemicals—but what the hey, the 90's seem to favor nihilistic heroes.

The world of the mid-21st century you find yourself trying to save is a fairly clichéd Cyberpunk realm; the corporations have done away with all those pesky congressmen and senators they've been renting and have taken over the world themselves, thus throwing things into a near-anarchic state. The major baddie of the situation is a super-character named,



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System Requirements: IBM Compatible 486 DX2-66 (Pentium 60 recommended), 8 MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM, mouse; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards; Pentium 90, 16 MB RAM, SVGA graphics card required for 640 x 480 mode.
of Players: 1
Protection: None
Designer: D.W. Bradley
Publisher: Origin
Austin, TX
(512) 335-5200
Reader Service #: 331



Circle Reader Service #255

Citizens of Planet Earth:

You Are the Enemy.

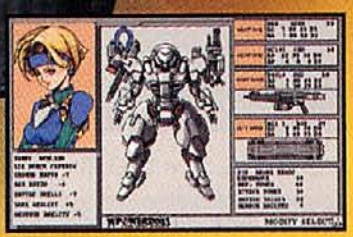
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NO LEAPING ZONE Don't expect to be imbued with awesome powers—despite stunning SVGA graphics, CyberMage is basically just another Doom clone.

not so subtly, Necrom, and wouldn't you know it? He's got a gem just like yours fused into his own forehead, and he's much better at using it than you are.

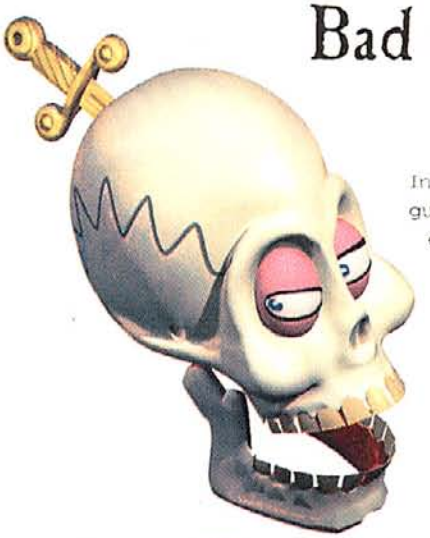
"EAT MY JUSTICE!!!"

While I could go into a lot of the details of the mechanics of CyberMage (CM), it might be merciful (and faster) to break the news to you as soon as possible. While stunning in SVGA mode, CM is basically Just Another Doom Clone, and those of you expecting some kind of interface breakthrough that would deliver a first-person Champions-esque experience are going to be sorely disappointed. Though there are attempts to model flying, both in a vehicle and on your own, the only motion that made me feel at all super-powered was the jumping. While your vertical jump isn't great (no leaping tall buildings in a single bound here), I must admit that leaping from rooftop to rooftop made me feel like The Tick and I had to resist yelling "Spoon!" every time I fell amongst the surprised foe.

Other than this small perk, though, you very quickly become a heavily-armed goon who must blast your way through the usual kinds of terrain in search of the usual keys, heal-ups, ammo, and weapons. The "levels" themselves are also well thought-out, although I never got the feeling I was moving through a "real" environment. And whenever the action moved inside I seemed to be doing far more "flip the secret switch, go downstairs, get the key, open door, kill guards" than I ever thought I would in this game.

The outdoor sets are ambitious, and there is a nice sense of other events going

DEADHEAD:
Bad to the Bone.



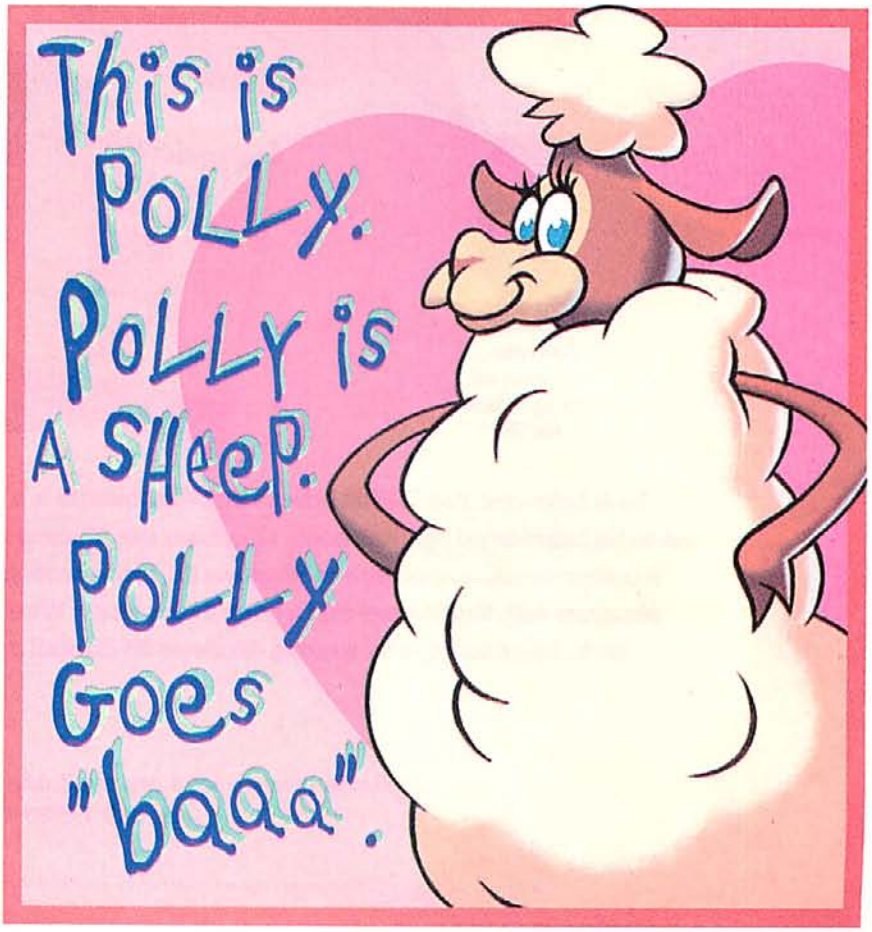
In the war of the Gearheads, this guy's M.O. is dead simple: Scare the other toys silly.

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gearheads
a furious war of wind-up toys

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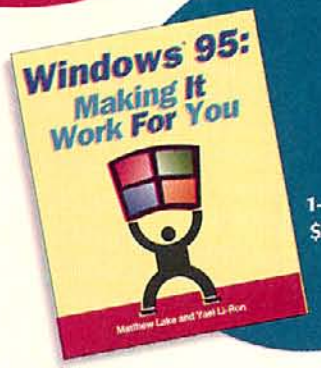
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Co-author, *Windows 95, Making It Work For You*



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CARNAGE CON CARNE Vehicular combat has a devastating effect on the competition.

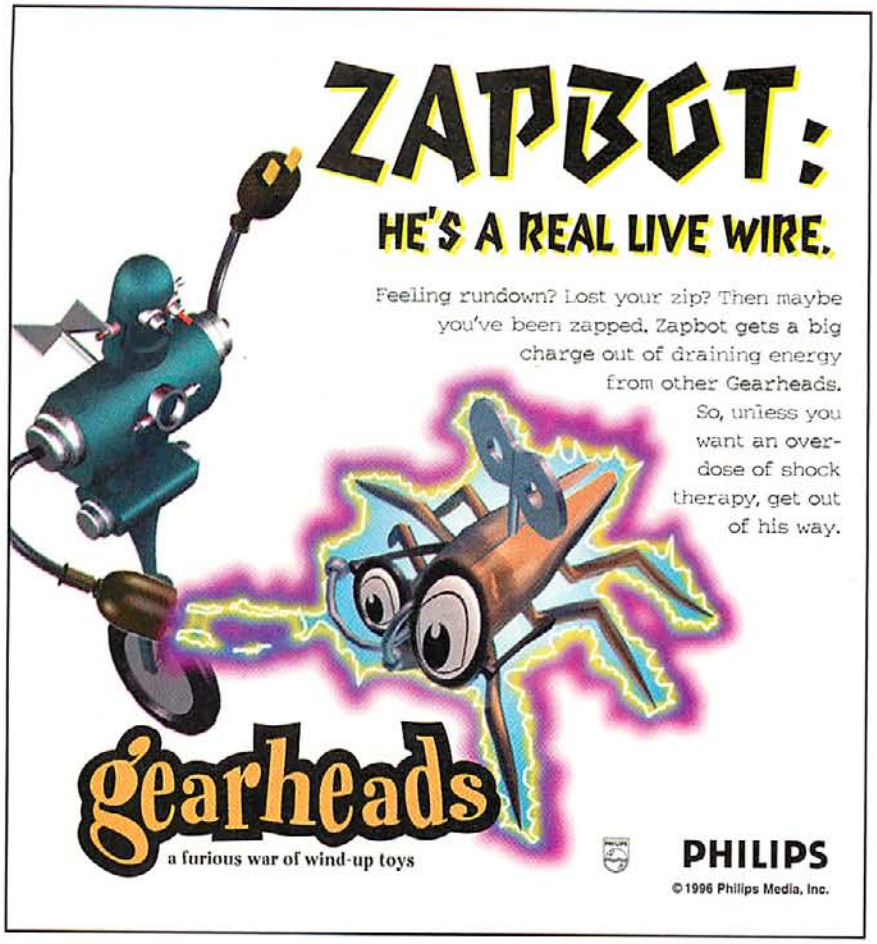
on without you. Unfortunately, the only thing people in this world seem to do is fight, wait to say something to you, or wait to say something to you and then fight. One of the rare technical problems in this game is that while the people you encounter look great, there is a severely limited number of "looks" available—the difference between the street tough who wants to kill you and the one who needs to impart some crucial information is that one shoots and the other talks. This doesn't strike me as a very efficient way of making friends in the big city.

As a first-person combat engine, CM works great. It handles complex firefights involving multiple combatants stretching over multiple levels realistically and smoothly, even on a doddering 486-66 (it'll take more if you want SVGA graphics, of course).

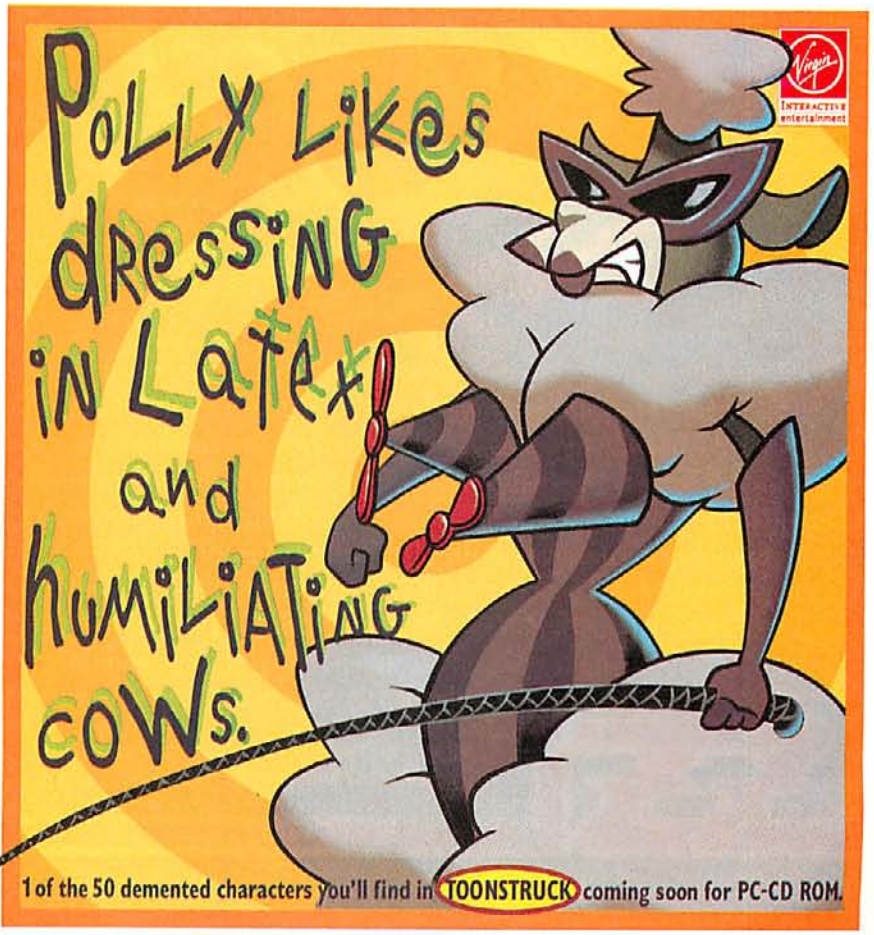
BUT WOULD KAL-EL APPROVE?

CYBERMAGE is a slick, enjoyable action game, but I must confess to being disappointed on two important fronts: content and style.

While this game is more complex than your usual DOOM-clone, it is still not in the league of a classic SF adventure game like SYSTEM SHOCK. The designer, D.W. Bradley, is most famous for the WIZARDRY series, and I don't think he stretched far enough from his roots in this title. As I've said, the plot is interesting, but since there is no interactive portion to the conversations, all you are really doing is living long enough to get somewhere to trigger a tape recording from an SVGA animatron. There is far too much combat and door-opening for this game to take its place beside more subtle Origin action/adventure games.



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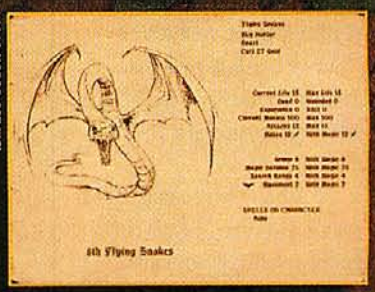
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For me, though, the biggest flaw of this game was its utter failure to live up to the style it had chosen: the adventures of a comic book hero. Both thematically and technically, there is little here to make me feel like a superhero. The first bad move was giving the player a whole arsenal of weapons to use. Any goon can fire a plasma rifle, but when was the last time you saw Batman packing heat?

While it might be a philosophical debate whether this game is about simply slaughtering to survive instead of "heroism," the "super" part of the concept is undeniably weak. Bradley has created a set of superpowers that come off like spells, and, while absorbing the essence of the dead is an interesting, albeit dark twist, I never felt as if I was doing anything except gathering dungeon-hack mana for my own benefit. Sure, I defeated the bad guy, but since he was after me first, it was hardly a heroic act.

Even the sets themselves undermine the whole comic book premise. The whole lure of having super-powers is the fantasy of absolute control of your environment; tossing cars, bowling troops over with a lightpost, smashing through walls. But the poor nihilistic CYBERMAGE can't even knock a tree out of his way or set upholstery on fire. The shattering stained glass of HEXEN conveys a better sense of power than anything I encountered in this game.

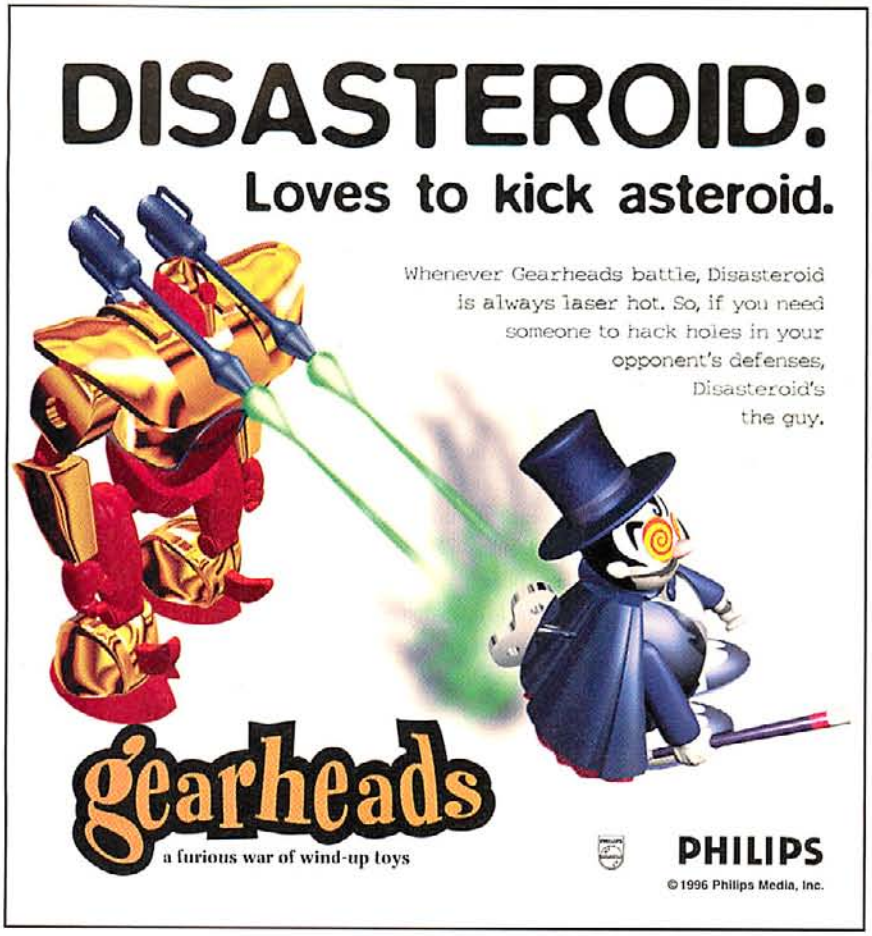
CYBERMAGE is an excellent single-player, first-person shooter, on a par with DARK FORCES. The storyline takes enough twists to make you forget the clichéd setup. On the other hand, if you truly want to know if "you have what it takes to be a superhero?" you won't be finding any answers here.

APPEAL: For 3-D action fans, CYBERMAGE is a no-brainer. Comic book fans looking for some real superhero action might be a bit disappointed though.

PROS: A great looking first-person combat game with a good story.

CONS: A long way to go for a DOOM-clone, and there is nothing but lip-service paid to the comic book style it covets.

CG RATED ★★★



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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Altered States

At Play In Purgatory With Bethesda's New Mission-Oriented Doom Alternative

by Peter Olafson

I didn't just play THE TERMINATOR: FUTURE SHOCK. I was there in it. Three or four missions into this spectacular 3-D action game from Bethesda Softworks, you're sent off to disable an enemy base. The trick is: you have to find it first. Along the way, you'll come upon a high ridge. You can climb the slope to the top and peer down into the bleak no-man's land below. At that moment, I wasn't sitting in front of a computer at 3 a.m. with a two-liter bottle of Diet Coke tucked between my knees. I was there, poking my head over that ridge just enough to see without being seen, turning my head slowly in search of even a flicker of enemy movement. FUTURE SHOCK had sucked me through the screen, and, powerless to resist, I found that a rare and a wonderful place to be.



ONE FOR THE GIPPER: Completing FUTURE SHOCK's mission objectives requires following orders and using your head. Of course, an itchy trigger finger always helps.

WHAT'S MY MISSION NOW?

This second entry in Bethesda's line of TERMINATOR action games is simply the most immersive 3-D shooter to surface to date and the best thing to happen to 3-D gaming since DOOM. The first game, RAMPAGE, was all burnished good looks and almost no substance. Forget it. This one looks as though someone had dropped a bomb on it—in fact, that's exactly what has happened—and staying alive and doing your job is a positive art.

You're the Human Resistance's newest recruit in its war against the SkyNet-controlled robots occupying post-apocalypse Los Angeles. Leader John Connor and his surrogates will dispatch you on 17 harrowing missions—a structure borrowed from Bethesda's earlier TERMINATOR. That could mean blowing up a base, killing a traitor, performing a whole series of tasks or simply reaching a destination. (There's a time-travel storyline here that gradually coalesces out of the results of your missions, but I won't spoil it for you, except to say the ending is very satisfying.)

Either way, that involves exploring a range of wide-open 3-D environments where you can do more or less what you want, when you want. (A lot of the fun here is simple exploration.) Whether escaping an apparent dead-end in a warehouse, finding your way out of an atriumed building or climbing a shaft from the depths of a sewer, there's no sense of restraint, no feeling of the game imposing on you. The only evident limits are those of your character's physical person and those of the physical world. (Well, most mission areas *do* have an impassable border—whether unclimbable ruins or a radiation zone too hot to handle.)

That world is gritty, realistic, and littered with bodies and body parts—even a trench full of bones—and examples of general chaos: blasted buildings, collapsed sections of freeway, abandoned vehicles and even a derailed train. You can explore all manner of non-essential buildings in search of supplies: convenience stores, apartments and office buildings. But be warned: You're not the first visitor.



MASTER BLASTER: Use heavy artillery with discretion. Shooting robots at too close a range will get you a hot shrapnel shower.

VIRTUAL VERTIGO

Thanks to the utter intuitiveness of the controls, you'll navigate through them with ease. I played with the keyboard handling movement and the mouse handling direction and they went together like pecans and pie. It's fluid in movement, sensible in practice and almost bewitching in its effects. Consider: one of the mid-game missions requires you to plant satchel charges next to three satellite dishes. They're located atop high metal towers and reached by a series of narrow ramps and catwalks.

Three-quarters of the way up the first



Price: $69.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486 or better, 8 MB RAM, VGA graphics, 20 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, joystick or mouse; supports most sound cards.
Protection: None (CD must be in drive to play)
Designer: Kaare Siesing
Publisher: Bethesda Softworks
Gaithersburg, MD
(301) 963-2002
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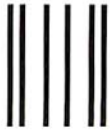
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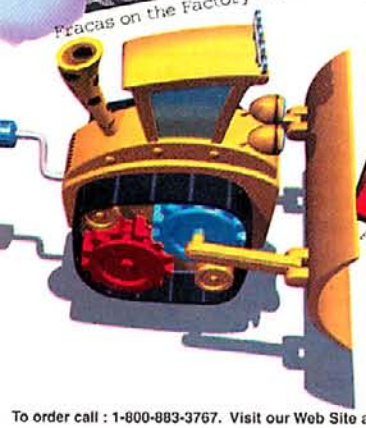




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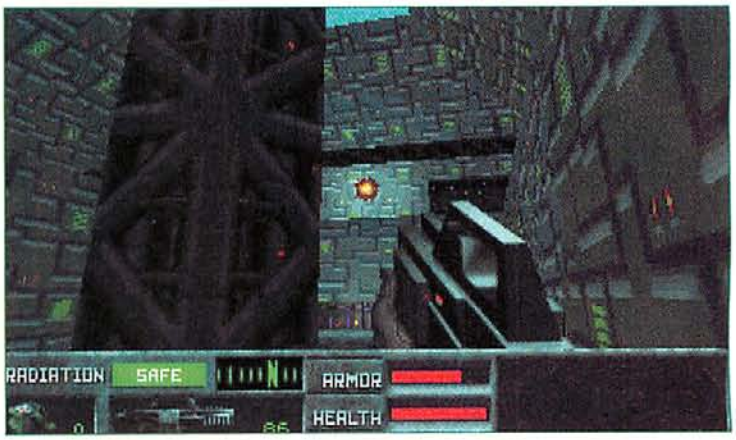
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tower, I made a mistake. I used the mouse to look down—almost straight down—and for a dizzying moment, an acidic knot formed in my stomach and the world seemed to tilt chaotically beneath me. It wasn't the motion sickness of which DOOM players sometimes complain. It was simple fear of heights.

Or, more to the point, it was fear of heights *induced by a computer game*. I've never felt anything like it before. Once again, for one blissful, sickening moment, I was there.

You're not simply walking around the whole time, either. That might get tiresome. In a handful of missions, you pilot either a captured Hunter/Killer aircraft or a jeep. The H/K sequences are 3-D shoot-em-ups rather cool to the touch, but the jeep sequences have a joyful rugged chaos all their own. You can drive like a lunatic, hoping to beat the odds with sheer speed, or progress in baby steps, shooting at every shadow. (It's especially fun to be able to fire in one direction while moving in another.)

Mind, it's great, but it isn't perfect. FUTURE SHOCK is the first game that uses Bethesda's new "Xngine" 3-D game engine—DAGGERFALL and XCAR were expected to follow it by a few months—and the game has some bumpy spots.



RUBBERNECK: FUTURE SHOCK's beefed up first-person game engine gives you total freedom of upper body movement.

For instance, on those vehicle-based missions, you're chained to your seat until you reach your destination. I would have preferred a more open-ended approach to travel, a la CYBERMAGE, that allowed the player to hop in and out of these craft at will as the situation required. (If anything, it would have added to strategy; you'd not only have to survive, but protect your ride as well.)

The automap—effectively a textured version of the 3-D one used in DESCENT—is more handsome than useful in this form. If you lose your bearings indoors, you may find you can't shrink the map enough for it to be a useful tool in finding your way out again. The outdoor helicopter-view snapshot of the immediate area is of no practical use.

A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

And while Connor radios you to urge you on to your tasks, alas, he never tells you if you've blown a critical element of a mission—say, by using a satchel charge in the wrong spot. That's a real problem. For example, the 11th mission is a three-part affair: race through a section of city to destroy a convoy; blow the bridge it meant to cross; and disable the factory to which it was headed. I knocked out the convoy (or so I thought), took down the bridge and the factory and waited for the mission to end.

And waited. The mission didn't end. I finally realized that I hadn't destroyed the entire convoy. Unfortunately, having already blown the bridge, there was no way to go back and finish the job. Yikes. Once I figured that out, I restarted the scenario...and found that this time, I'd been provided with only one satchel charge instead of the two that were required. Yikes twice.

Fortunately, I had one save from late in the previous mission, and when I played it through and moved on to the 11th mission again, the game properly set me up with two satchel charges. But that was too close a call. Without that save, I'd have had to restart.

But I kept going, and not just because I had to keep going to write this review. I loved FUTURE SHOCK dearly, for all its faults, and I'm genuinely sorry it's over. (I want data disks, and I want them now.) I usually don't play a completed game a second time, but I'm looking forward to revisiting this one using Virtual IO's I-Glasses to peer over that hill into that bleak no man's land. It may take a while to find, but I'll know it when I see it.

After all, I was there.

Flies In The Ointment

FUTURE SHOCK's engine, splendid as it may be, does misfire on occasion. Some examples:

- A distant object that you can see in dark silhouette on the periphery on your vision disappears entirely when you pivot and look straight at it.
- A clear visual line-of-sight between gun muzzle and intended target, and the ability to tag your target with the crosshairs, does not necessarily mean you can hit said target when firing at a downward angle from a raised area. (Your ammo may still detonate against the edge of that raised area.)
- Even with an unobstructed, horizontal LOS, you may miss an enemy entirely at reasonably close range, due to a lag in the screen update. This appears to be the result of a lag in the on-screen update of enemy positions; I was shooting where they weren't. In such cases, the game performs sudden position updates, and the enemy simply zaps to a new location nearby.
- Crashes to DOS often happen with several enemies on screen. This could be a conflict with some internal ceiling for simultaneous operations.
- Graphical problems: robots sometimes poked parts of their bodies through intact walls, and could be killed through them. The ground graphics occasionally break up, as does the sound of any weapon.

APPEAL: Anyone who enjoys DOOM, but wants something new.

PROS: Compelling, unrestrained, you-are-there 3-D gameplay with a wide range of missions and three types of transport.

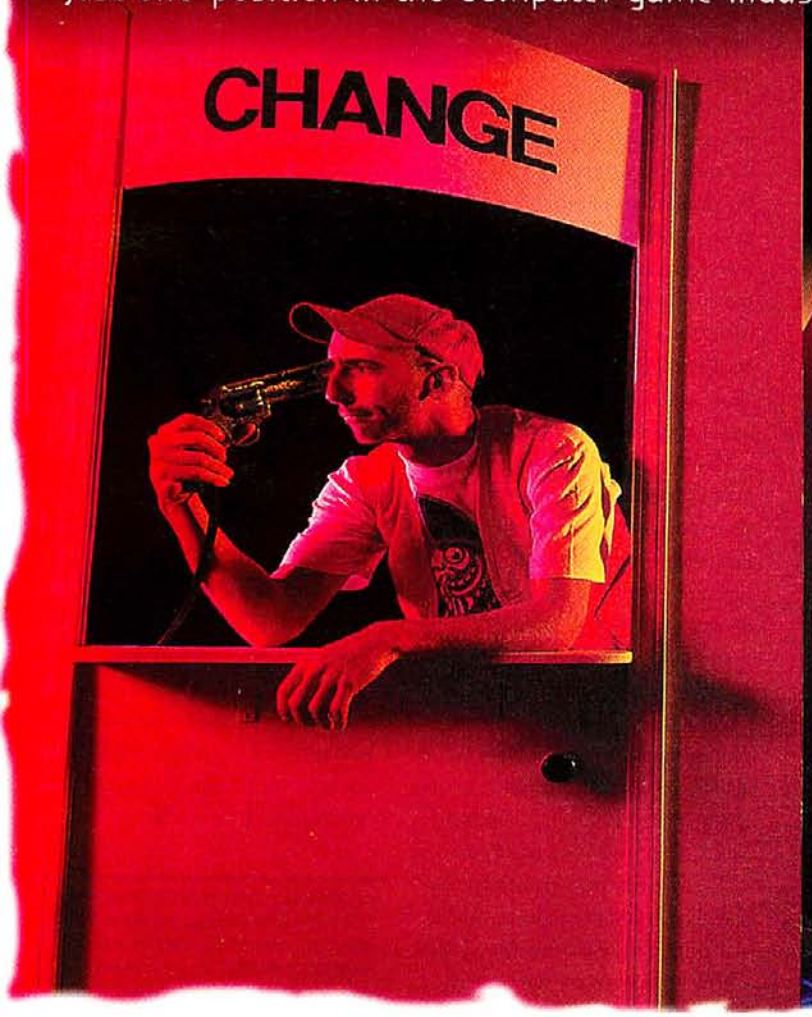
CONS: It's got some oddities, inconsistencies and bugs, bugs, bugs.

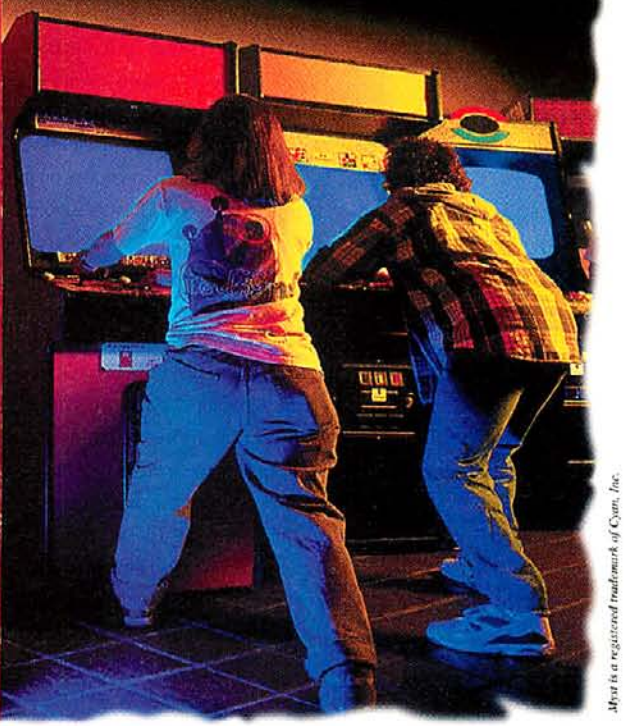
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Cardboard Car Wars

ZONE RAIDERS Provides An Interesting, If Uninspired Auto-Destruction Experience

by Martin E. Cirulis



KILLER CLASSICS "Fixing up" old cars takes on new meaning in ZONE RAIDERS, where you can add heavy weaponry to your classic Olds.

Every year, some faraway gaming current generates a wave that throws game publishers everywhere into a "we've got to catch this trend" tizzy. 1995 was the year of DOOM clones. This is the year of the Car War, everybody and their dog seems to be developing an action game where you drive around blowing things up real good. Virgin Interactive's entry is a straightforward piece of vehicular mayhem called ZONE RAIDERS, and it completely lives up to the game classification notice on the side of the box: "3-D Driving/Shooter." Unfortunately for gamers, it does very little to surpass this description.

ASPHALT ATROCITIES

Even the most basic game has a premise, and for ZONE RAIDERS it's a '90s spin on an '80s movie. You're a wacky, freedom fighting *Road Warrior* kind of guy, trying to save the people from a technocratic tyranny in a post-holocaust landscape. To accomplish this, you slap together a funky, laser-armed hovercraft based on a classic 20th-century automobile, declare yourself a Zone Raider and proceed to take it to those technocratic tinheads.

COOL, BUT NOT CLEVER

While I hate to describe games in terms of their predecessors, ZR is derivative enough that it necessitates this kind of treatment. Basically what we have here is DESCENT on asphalt. Other than the fact your vehicle moves in two dimensions instead of three, and you are restrained by guardrails instead of tunnel walls, the game design is virtually identical. You must guide your vehicle into a maze of roadways, retrieve certain objects by driving over them, and then get out, all within the allotted time. Take too long to do the job and the security system releases a flying "Boss"-class robot that hunts you down and blows your doors off.

Players begin with an old jalopy of a hovercraft, but can trade up after a few successful missions to three other, more interesting-looking vehicles. The usual variety of pyrotechnic weapons and vehicle repairs/augmentations are available, in true arcade fashion, by driving over them as they lie strewn along the roadways. Combat is a simple matter of pointing your car toward your target and letting an auto-targeting system take care of the precision aiming. Like driving a tank from Kodak, all you do is point and shoot.

The actual driving part of ZR is enjoyable, though the fact you are in a hovercraft detracts somewhat from the visceral part of the experience—no squealing tires, no screeching brakes. On the other hand, some care has been taken to model a semi-realistic environment, and the way the cars handle in jumps and slides makes you feel, at times, like the star of some high-tech *Dukes of Hazard* re-make.

GETTING WHAT YOU PAID FOR

ZONE RAIDERS is a competent, if somewhat uninspired design. The missions are fairly interesting, but most will find too few for their game-dollar. The graphics are good and, while I think more time could have been spent on the appearance of your vehicle, some of the city-scapes and exotic clover-leafs are impressive indeed.

If you are looking for a straight-forward arcade "3-D Driving/Shooter" that will give you fast action on an upper-end 486 without bothering you with little details like variety or plausibility, then ZONE RAIDERS will be a treat for you. But if this doesn't describe exactly what you are looking for, you should probably leave this one in the used-car lot. There's little more here than meets the eye. CG



Price: $59.95
System Requirements: 486DX2 50 or higher (Pentium recommended), 8 MB RAM, VGA graphics (SVGA recommended), 10 MB hard drive space; 2x CD-ROM drive; supports Sound Blaster and compatibles.
of Players: 1-4
Designer: Image Space, Inc.
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Irvine, CA
(800) 874-4607
http://www.vie.com
Reader Service #: 333

APPEAL: Dedicated Car-Wars fans will enjoy ZONE RAIDERS, but those outside the genre might want to wait for something meatier to come along.

PROS: A good networkable arcade game with some enjoyable driving characteristics.

CONS: Probably too basic for the non-cartridge gamer and a little short in the gameplay department.

CG RATED ★★★

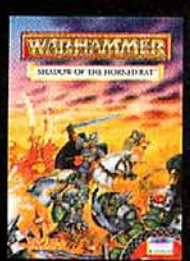






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CG CHOICE

Gunner's High

MARATHON 2 Improves On Last Year's 3-D Shoot 'em Up Success

by Christopher Breen

I don't know about you, but whenever I sit hunched over a box of greasy popcorn in my seven-dollar movie-theater seat and the first preview's title contains the words, "Again," "Two," or "The Return of," I get a sinking feeling. Although some might dismiss it as the first symptoms of cotton-seed oil poisoning, I've lived with the condition long enough to recognize it plainly—*sequelophobia*. That's right, the wooziness that results from watching a rehash of the previous season's blockbuster.

It is with this feeling that I unpacked, with some trepidation, Bungie Software's MARATHON 2: DURANDAL, the follow-up to last year's runaway hit for the Macintosh. Here it was, the same damnable triangular box design—albeit in canary yellow instead of blue—that virtually guarantees the top flap will rip when you open it, the same layout in the manual, and the same red seal indicating that the game has been accelerated for Power Macintosh. Could my gut be right? Was this just more of the same old, same-old?

Hardly.

MARATHON 2: DURANDAL is more than a simple rehashing of one of 1995's finest Mac games. Rather, MARATHON 2 takes the original MARATHON's frantic gameplay and solid storyline and adds drop-dead gorgeous, high-resolution full-screen graphics, 16-bit active stereo-panning sound, several new network scenarios and battlefields, a wider variety of beasties, and the opportunity to practice your backstroke (many of the scenarios require that you play under water, or lava, or sewage). Far from treading over the same old ground, MARATHON 2 blazes new trails, once again raising the standard of 3-D action games on the Macintosh.



BUGGY SOFTWARE MARATHON 2's full-screen view helps set a more sinister tone as you battle the bug-like Pfor on their home planet.

IT WAS 17 YEARS AGO TODAY

A full decade later, you still can't forget the exhilarating whoosh of a single SPNKR-XI7 rocket, or the maniacal pleasure of wiping out a nest of the bug-like Pfhor, who'd rudely taken up residence on the starship Marathonmina. Your only regret is that Durandal, the rogue computer responsible for recklessly beaming you about the Marathon to do battle with the otherworlders, managed to pack up his superior intellect and oil out of the area with only a faint promise of a second date.

Durandal has now made good on that promise. Shanghaied by this brainy collection of processors, you've been transported across the reaches of space to the planet Lh'owon. Your mission: Destroy the Pfhor garrison and unravel the secrets of the planet's ancient civilization. Of course what this really means is dash about, stockpile ammunition and ever-more-powerful weapons, heal your wounds and Kill! Kill! Kill!

THE SOUND OF MAYHEM

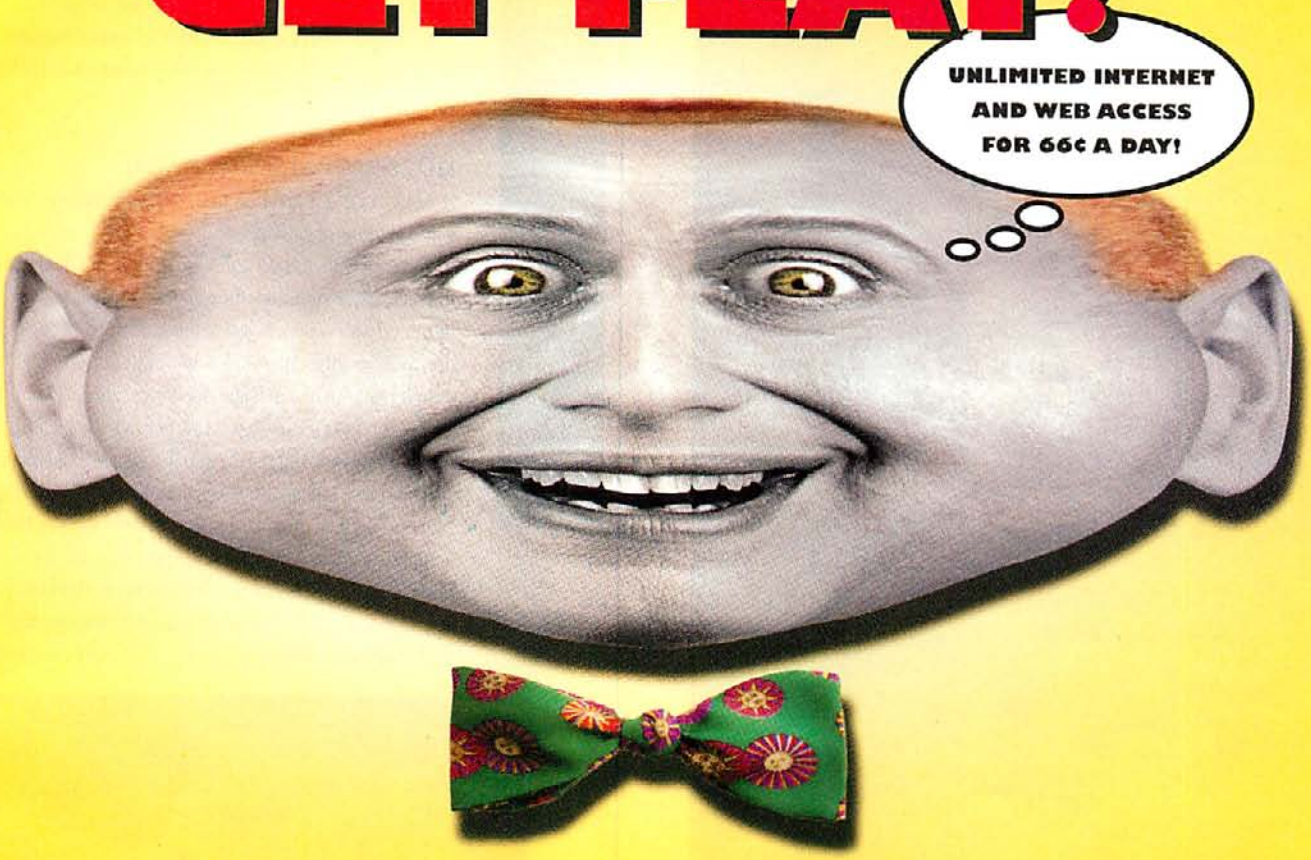
Although MARATHON 2 introduces a host of new enemies, a couple of new weapons (sawed-off shotguns!), and an updated plot line, the real show stopper is the game's sound and graphics. MARATHON I's haunting background music is gone, replaced by eerily authentic natural sounds like bubbling lava, lapping water, and howling wind. As with the other sound effects in the game, these pan across the stereo field as your orientation changes. If a pool is to your right, for example, you'll hear water sounds mostly from the right speaker. Although the original version used stereo sound, it wasn't so convincing that you could track an enemy by sound alone. With MARATHON 2, you can.

Bungie has also improved the game's interface and consequently widened the field of vision by placing the gauges at the bottom of the screen and removing the side panels. The new panoramic, letterbox perspective removes the tunnel-vision so common in 3-D games and presents a



Price: $79.95
System Requirements: 68040 or higher Macintosh, 4 MB RAM, CD-ROM drive, 8-bit color monitor (13" recommended), System 7 or later.
of Players: 1-8
Designer: Jason Jones
Publisher: Bungie
Chicago, IL
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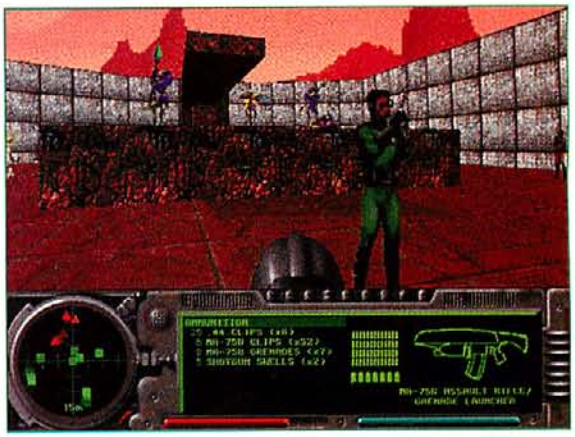
view realistic enough that on more than one occasion I found myself craning my neck to peer around a corner. This, coupled with the game's beautiful texture-mapped, 16-bit graphics and dynamic lighting, makes MARATHON 2 very easy on the eyes.

KILL, SPACEMAN! FASTER! FASTER!

MARATHON 2 also differs from the first iteration of the game in terms of gameplay.

To begin with, this version is less puzzle-oriented than its predecessor. Although the original MARATHON brimmed with action, it also required a fair bit of cogitation to escape the different levels—switches always seemed just out of reach and doors were always closing a split-second too soon. DURANDAL doesn't completely forego brainwork, but mayhem is the game's main focus.

This doesn't mean, however, that strategy plays no part. Not only do your enemies seem smarter—some of them actually run away when you start shooting—but there are also raging interpersonal conflicts among the baddies. As in DOOM, one of the best strategies for getting out of a sticky situation is to anger one of the less-mannerly creatures and duck out of sight while he takes his hostility out on his nearest and dearest.



AH, FRESH AIR Unlike the original MARATHON, DURANDAL allows you outside for a breath of clean, fresh alien air.

From a pacing standpoint the games are also quite different. Playing at the Normal level (there are the usual five difficulty levels, ranging from Kindergarten to Total Carnage), MARATHON 1's level of violence gently rises as the game progresses. This sequel follows this same pattern, until you hit the late teens of the 28 levels, at which point all hell breaks loose. One minute you're leisurely blasting sewage-sucking bipeds, the next you're scurrying around like an ant on a hot griddle, frantically gathering shotgun shells and randomly unleashing both barrels on the surrounding hordes. I expect that more than one player will choose this moment to quit the game in frustration, open the Preferences dialog box and change the current

skill level to something requiring a little less adrenaline.

NET SCRAPE

As great as MARATHON 2 may be as a single-player game, it can't hold a candle to the frantic, blood-pumping thrill when it is played over the network. In networking mode you and seven of your buddies can still play the Every Man For Himself Scenario found in the original MARATHON, but MARATHON 2 introduces such childlike



COME HELL OR HIGH WATER Sock it to the Pfhor by land and by sea.

diversions as King of the Hill, Tag, and Kill the Guy With the Ball (in this case the "ball" is a human skull). In addition, if you're having a tough time beating the single-player game on your own, you're welcome to form a network team and play the game cooperatively. But steep is the price you must pay for network play. For satisfactory gameplay, every player should be sitting at a Power Macintosh connected to an Ethernet-based LAN. And although the game includes a feature that enables you to scream at one another over the net using PlainTalk microphones, conference calling over speakerphone is still the communication method of choice.

THE END OF THE COMPLIMENT

MARATHON 1 was no slouch, but MARATHON 2 is, in nearly every way, a vast improvement. Yes, if you preferred the original's more cerebral elements over its shoot-'em-up charms you may long for a few more puzzles. And those who aren't ready for an all-out assault may feel overwhelmed in the latter half of the single-player game. But no one, *no one*, will be disappointed by the game's improved look and feel or the added-value network play.

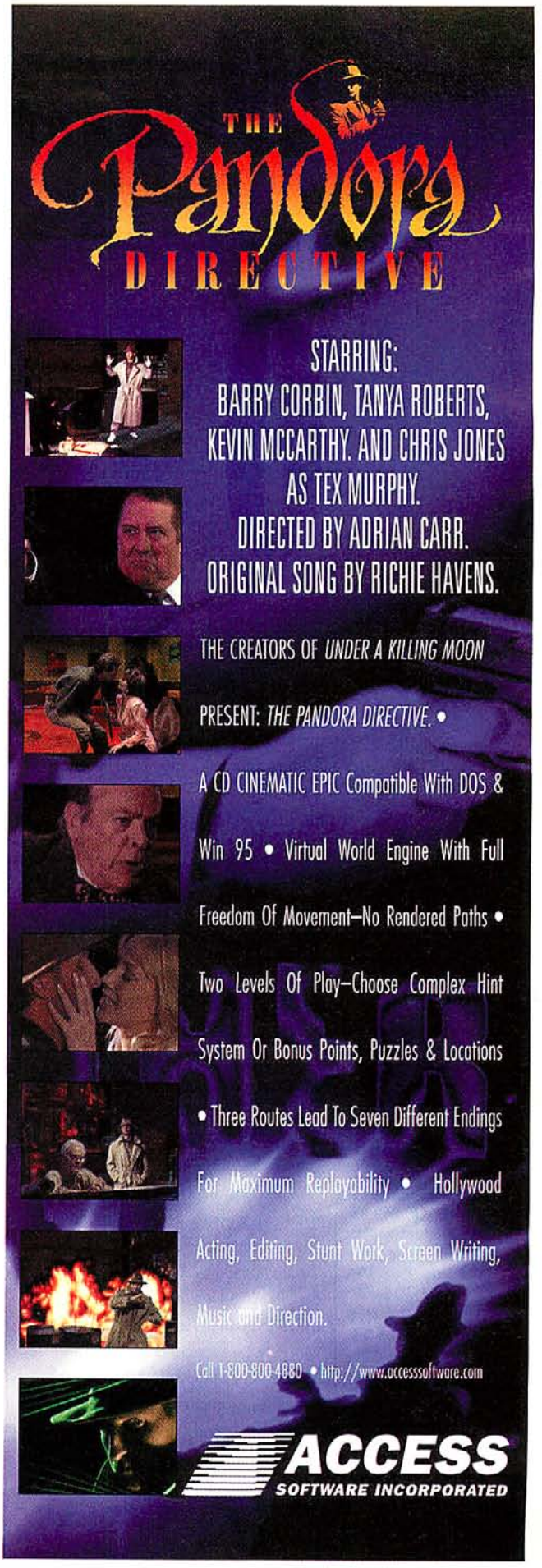
Bungie has produced a remarkable, refreshing sequel and has once again captured first place in the Macintosh action Marathon.

APPEAL: Any Macintosh gamer, particularly those looking for 3-D shoot 'em up action.

PROS: Gorgeous graphics and rich sound accompanied by frantic game play. If you can't play this game over the office's Mac network, consider quitting your job.

CONS: Those who enjoyed MARATHON 1 for its puzzles may be disappointed by M2's focus on action.

CG RATED



Circle Reader Service #246

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Worm Warfare

Earthworm Jim Takes A Bite Out Of Platform Game Stereotypes

by George Jones

One day you're a common earth-eating worm, the next an evil-battling, save-the-princess, cosmic superhero. Such is the life of Earthworm Jim. This guy, er, worm is a 90's James Bond kind of superhero who bungee-jumps, hitches rides on rodents and in underwater glass bubbles, and of course, gets the girl in the end. Life as a worm is rarely this much fun.

Thankfully EARTHWORM JIM, the Windows 95-based platform game is just as much fun. This title, much like the main character (who has his own Saturday morning cartoon and line of action figures), oozes character, from the fun, lush graphics to the hilarious sound bites throughout the game. And some of the most annoying platform game traits have, for the most part, been avoided.

WORM HOOK

In an age when crappy platform games are a dime a dozen, Activision has graciously spoiled us PC gamers by porting yet another top-notch platform scroller. A little less challenging than PITFALL HARRY'S MAYAN ADVENTURE, EARTHWORM JIM is still on par, with rich graphics and some ingenious pacing.

Whereas most platform-style games require your hero to keep moving through one horizontal level after another, Tom Tanaka and Douglas TenNapel's level designs avoid such monotony. Plenty of the 20 levels in JIM are of the traditional variety, but scattered along the way are lots of mini-games, such as space races, and bungee jumping. The Andy Asteroids "intermissions," which require you to race through an asteroid field, become a bit tedious by the fifth or sixth run-through, but for the most part, these short intermediate levels serve as a great way of breaking up and pacing the game.

And even the normal levels are creative. You'll traverse junkyards and explore underwater environs. You'll even play some parts of the game without your trusty plasma-firing battle suit. And, in a radical departure from the platform genre, you don't have to fight a super-powered boss at the end of each level.



SNOTTY BEHAVIOR During your adventure, you'll engage in a bungee jump duel with the likes of Major Mucus and his friend Mucus Phlegm Brain.

INSTRUMENTS OF DESTRUCTION

Your suit, of course, is what makes it all happen. The top left of your screen shows how much power your armor has left. The bottom of the screen shows how many plasma shots are stored up, as well as any special weapons you've aquired.

The controls are simple. One button jumps, one button fires your energy weapon and a third button cracks your whip (PITFALL HARRY envy?).

One beef I had with the controls is that when you accumulate special weapons, you have no choice over when to use them. Say, for example, you pick up the Mega Plasma , a one-shot destroy-all weapon. The next time you open fire on the enemy, you have to use it—you can't save it for your showdown with an end boss. But Since Big Bosses are rare, this is not a huge problem.

Gamers can choose from easy, intermediate and advanced difficulty levels, and the game is easily configurable through the same nifty Properties Box as in PITFALL HARRY. Aother nifty feature is that the game records your progress, so each time you play you can start off on the level where you left off (or died).

Despite a few minor shortcomings and the negative label that some stuffy PC gamers immediately brand all platform games with, EARTHWORM JIM is a hoot and a holler. Put anyone in front of it, and with the exception of the grumpiest non-action gamer around, they'll love it. No, it won't have you obsessing over how to defeat Queen Slug-For-A-Butt. But you'll have a marvelous time the whole way.

I'm glad Activision decided to port this title to Windows 95. Newcomers to computer games will appreciate how easy it is to get into, while veteran action gamers will appreciate the diversity in the action.

Here's hoping the next major port of a console title is as much fun. Hey Nintendo, how about DONKEY KONG COUNTRY?

Check out Jeff James' action column for a list of EARTHWORM JIM Cheats. CG



Price: $49.95
System Requirements: IBM Compatible 486-33, Windows 95, 8 MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM, mouse; supports Windows 95 compatible sound cards;
of Players: 1
Protection: None
Designer: Shiny Entertainment
Publisher: Activision
Los Angeles, CA
(310) 473-9200
Reader Service #: 335

APPEAL: Action gamers, particularly fans of the platform genre, will love EARTHWORM JIM.

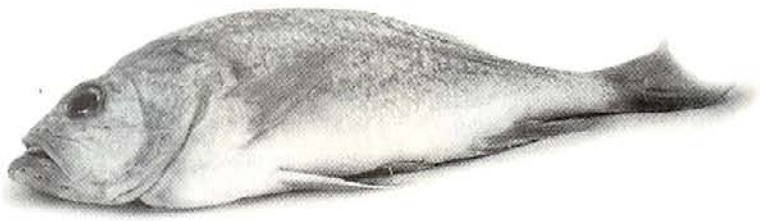
PROS: Easy to learn, fun to play, great graphics, and entertaining sound bites. Best of all, the game has lots of character and variety—unusual for "platform-type" scrolling games.

CONS: Some minor control problems, including the inability to save special weapons for later use.

CG RATED

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Hot Wheels

SCREAMER Brings Colorful Arcade Racing To The PC, But You'll Need A Fast Machine To Catch It

by Scott A. May

For years, personal computers have outpaced plug-and-play gaming consoles in speed and sophistication. But the advent of "next generation" systems like the Sony PlayStation and Sega Saturn has quickly narrowed the technology gap. Nowadays, even *with* the onset of Windows 95 and more action games than we've ever seen before, PC action enthusiasts still find themselves glancing with envy at some of the hot new console titles being released.

One particular action genre has singularly fallen short when measured against its "purer" siblings. This category is coin-op style arcade racing, and besides Electronic Arts' THE NEED FOR SPEED, most other titles have been incapable of providing the requisite thrills, chills and spills on gamers' desktops. Virgin Interactive's answer to the call is SCREAMER, a two-fisted driving game that, given enough memory muscle and CPU horsepower, certainly lives up to its name.

NO HOLDS BARRED

Straight out of the box, SCREAMER is a simple, no-holds-barred, single-player arcade racer, similar in character to such best-selling console titles as RIDGE RACER and VIRTUAL RACING. Choose from six wide-bodied, low-to-the-ground machines, each available with either automatic or manual transmission. The exact configuration of each car, as evidenced by their names, is strictly arcade generic: Shadow, Tiger, Hammer, Rising Sun, Panther and Yankee. Each car is rated for top speed, grip (how it handles corners) and acceleration.



WRECK CITY Treacherous city courses offer ample opportunity for undesired vertical motion.

Three courses are available in a Normal, or single-race, game: Palm Town, Lake Valley and Lindburg, where you'll compete against nine other computer-controlled drivers in a 3-, 5-, 10- or 25-lap race. Three skill levels—Rookie, Amateur and Pro—allow you to substantially increase the tenacity of the "other guys" as your own driving prowess improves. Keep in mind you're not only competing to win the race, but also to finish it. An on-screen timer counts down the seconds until you reach the next checkpoint, where you're given additional time. Fail to reset the clock and the race abruptly ends.

The championship game tests your mettle a bit more; you must finish in the top three on each course in order to progress to the next race. Success in championship mode is also the only way you'll get to see SCREAMER's other three courses (not available in a Normal game). Finish all six courses, and you'll start over again, at a substantially higher skill level.

If your eyes are still in their sockets, proceed to the final stage: Bullet League. Here you'll run the entire gauntlet again, this time competing against only one car, The Bullet.

One advantage SCREAMER has over its



CAN'T DRIVE 55 SCREAMER boasts high-resolution, high-speed arcade racing fun.



Price: $59.99
System Requirements: IBM Compatible 486 DX2-66 (Pentium 90 recommended), 8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), DOS 5 or greater, SVGA (with 2 MB RAM recommended), CD-ROM; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards.
of Players: 1-8 (network required)
Protection: None
Designer: Graffiti
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Irvine, CA
(714) 833-8710
http://www.vie.com
Reader Service #: 336

arcade and console brethren is that, during the course of a Championship Season, you can save and reload your games.

SCREAMER 2000

But wait—there's more. No, SCREAMER can't cut through steel cans as easily as it slices tomatoes. But it does have three special modes that offer several entertaining variations on the standard racing format. Time Attack, as the name implies, is a solo race against your best lap time on the track of your choice. During each lap a ghost image of your car will appear on the track before you. Use this as a visual reference to your current lap time—if you trail the ghost car, you're seconds behind your best lap time; if you pass, you're on track to set a new course record. Unfortunately, you'll need at least 12 MB of RAM to enjoy this special option, since your previous lap (the ghost car) is stored in memory. Those with only 8 MB of RAM can still race, but won't see the ghost car.

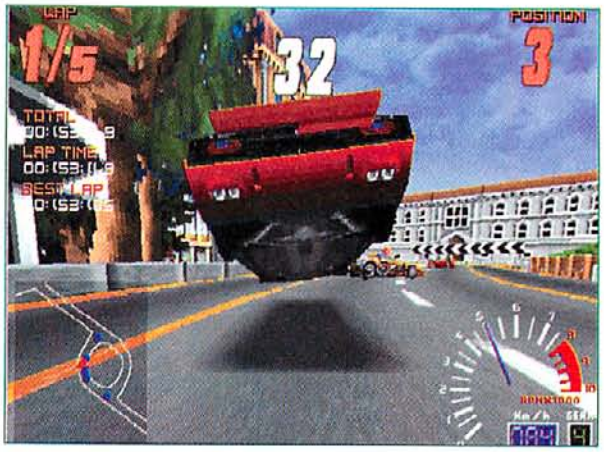
Another racing option, Cone Carnage, prompts you to ram a series of cone barriers specially placed around the track. Each cone you hit adds another second to the checkpoint timer. The alternate version of this race, Slalom, demands that you do just the opposite. Instead of striking cones, you must maneuver between them to earn extra time. Miss a "gate" and the checkpoint clock keeps ticking.

TOTAL RACING NETWORK

SCREAMER's big bonus is network play, supporting up to seven nodes of simultaneous head-to-head racing. It's a kick, to be sure, for several reasons. The computer-controlled racers rarely make mistakes, particularly at upper skill levels. This means they're usually less compelling opponents. Humans, on the other hand, are a different story; racing against your own kind inevitably and inherently fires each driver's competitive spirit. You can't damage your car, but each bump, spinout, guard rail grind and wreck, comically executed as an end-over-end tumble, pushes you to the back of the pack. The computer usually avoids such collisions, but human nature being what it is, network play often provokes more wipeouts than the opening lap of the Indy 500.

SPEEDY COMPROMISES

The graphics are arcade quality, postdated perhaps a year or two. Each course winds through all manner of terrain, including freeways, city streets and mountain passes, dipping and weaving around buildings, tunnels and high-banked rural curves. The designers heap on plenty of peripheral chrome and glitter, in the guise of helicopters and jets zooming overhead, active windmills and rotating billboards. All are rendered in colorful 3-D texture maps. If nothing else, SCREAMER captures the stunning look and feel of the classic coin-op machines.



CATCHING AIR SCREAMER doesn't have realistic car models, but that won't stop you from driving 150 mph or leaving the ground when you hit bumps.

Four user-selectable driving views allow you to view the action whichever way you want it: full-screen (a hood-mounted camera), behind the dashboard, chase view and extended chase view.

Despite running in DOS 32-bit protected mode, SCREAMER exhibits the typical problems games do when played at the minimum system requirements. You'll need at least 12 MB of RAM to experience the game's polished SVGA graphics, but don't expect to enjoy high-res unless you've got a Pentium. High-resolution animation runs extremely choppy on a 486 DX2-66, but smoothes out on a 90 MHz Pentium. The alternative—the *only* option for systems with only 8 MB RAM—is to run the game in standard VGA mode. Here the graphics are chunky, but still look pretty good. It's a worthy compromise. Other factors, such as a quad-speed CD-ROM drive and local bus video card, also help to ease the hardware burden.

The game does offer decent support for specialty driving tools, including Thrustmaster's new Formula T2 steering wheel and floor peddles. Otherwise, a good analog joystick suffices. Even simple keyboard controls perform adequately.

THE HOME STRETCH

Playing SCREAMER is a gas, given its arcade limitations. Racing purists, of course, won't want to touch it with a 10-foot tailpipe, given its profound lack of real-world dynamics. About the only nod to realism is the ability to powerslide around particularly tight corners.

But it isn't meant to be real. SCREAMER is pretty much a no-brainer, targeting little more than your gut instincts and need for speed. And I mean this in a positive sense. Your console friends still aren't likely to be jealous, but at least now your PC can rev on the red line, almost with the best of 'em.

APPEAL: Arcade racing fans, or those looking for quick fix racing, should check out SCREAMER. Purists should stay away.

PROS: Colorful arcade-style eye candy for the PC, with racing options galore, including an 8-person network play. Championship mode and multiple skill levels boost long-term gameplay.

CONS: You'll need a powerhouse system to enjoy the SVGA graphics, smooth animation and advanced game options. Lack of real-world conventions will instantly put off racing purists.

CG RATED

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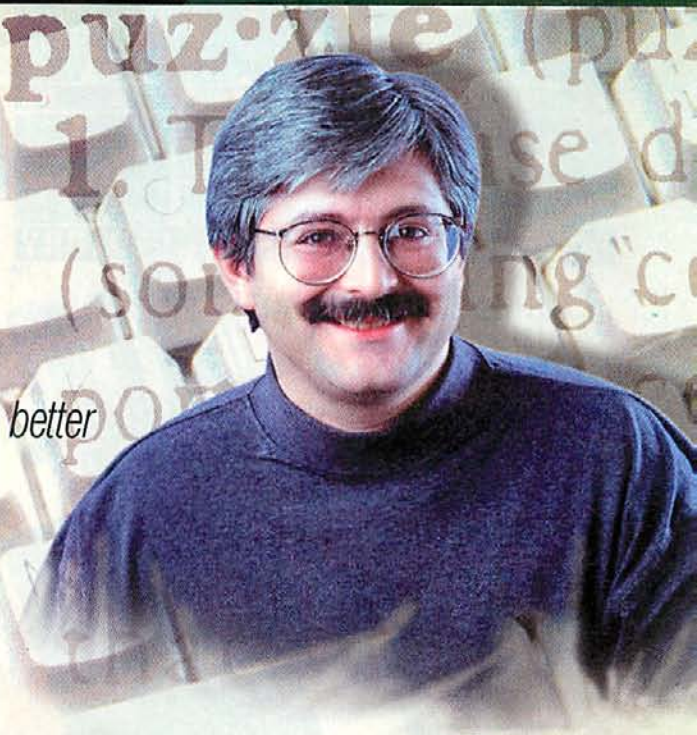
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Take The Last Trick

QQP's legacy of winning card games deserves better than CARD PLAYERS PARADISE



Admit it—we've all played silly little games like Solitaire on our computers, usually the incessantly repetitive version that comes with Windows. No game will ever match the tactile feel of flipping and shuffling cards (and for many users, this isn't a problem), but SOLITAIRE'S JOURNEY comes darned close to re-creating the experience, without wearing out your favorite poker deck. Over 100 different kinds of Solitaire, from mind-numbingly simplistic to agonizingly challenging, are combined with various "quests" to form the most unique slant of a classic game ever designed for the computer. Best of all, the game is readily available in bargain bins—I've seen it for as little as ten bucks.

Problem is, all of QQP's clever card games will soon find their way to discount heaven, as the company has been gutted, surviving in name only. For why, we can only speculate: perhaps the parent company, American Laser Games, simply decided to channel all of its resources into their line of games for girls, called HER INTERACTIVE. If so, the irony is that card games, especially good ones such as QQP designs, are among the games most played by females of all ages.

All of which makes the release of QQP's newest card game package, CARD PLAYERS PARADISE, bittersweet. It's obvious from the spartan packaging that this was a low-budget project, which belies the modest advances in documentation and layout—there's even an index, almost unheard of from QQP. Moreover, while the explanations of rules have the seemingly inevitable QQP holes, the copious examples of play are lucid enough to help you learn the more exotic games included.

ACE HIGH OR LOW?

The real winner here is Rummy 500: easy to learn, hard to master, it brings back memories of endless Rummy games played on long winter nights. Quick, natural and fluid, Rummy is quite good either versus the computer or via modem, and includes plenty of variants. Pinochle and Bezique (a forerunner of Pinochle) are just different enough that they test your ability to learn new bidding styles; players too accustomed to the comfortable parameters of Bridge will struggle. Casino is the weakest link of the four games, as it at first seemingly defies logic, then becomes too predictable as the pattern emerges.

The graphics are actually a step back from the crispness of BRIDGE OLYMPIAD, despite the increased use of digitized screens featuring "geographically educational" card-playing locations from around the world—they struck me as little more than fancy clip art (and truth be told, I'd rather view lands in SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION). One welcome change in PARADISE is that while the AI still cheats, at least it isn't as brazen as in the higher levels of BRIDGE OLYMPIAD, which never missed an opportunity to snag your lone King. On the other hand, this game will never compete with really good AI, such as in the best Bridge and Chess games—but then, where else can you go to play a good game of Rummy?

As with BRIDGE OLYMPIAD, you get to compete in a "World Tour" with the best amateur and professional opponents the computer can throw at you. After paying entry fees, you enter events and win coins

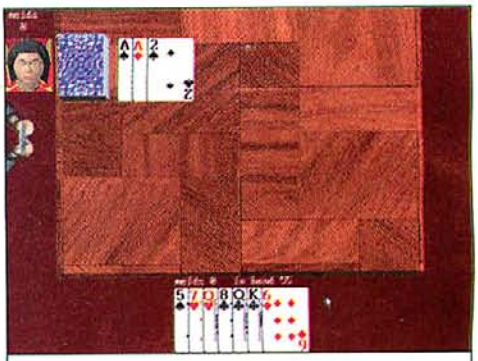
> "It's no Card Player's Paradise with QQP gone from the industry."

CHECK!

- The "John Madden of Chess" is featured in MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS by Davidson and Associates. The National Master (who has wins over several top international chess stars) shows how his unique style, punctuated by fresh and lively commentary, can make you a better player regardless of your playing level.
- YOU DON'T KNOW JACK has become such a big hit for Berkeley Systems that they are releasing an add-on pack of additional questions for a street price of around $15.

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TERRY COLEMAN



MIND-MELD Even the decent computer opponents can't save CARD PLAYERS PARADISE from the Land Of Lost Tricks.

and lanterns—more on this later—to advance. Typical of QQP's "campaign games," this is enjoyable at first. But after the first couple of times, it fades, unlike, say, the eminently replayable SOLITAIRE'S JOURNEY. Why, for example, do you win lanterns to wander through a city maze, here every bit as infuriating as any needless maze from an adventure game? Wouldn't a simple Top 10 ranking or medal-winning system, as in BRIDGE OLYMPIAD, have worked better?

In the end, CARD PLAYERS PARADISE is a microcosm for QQP: some annoying bugs, typos and tepid layout make you think it was rushed through development; worse, the game, despite some fine moments (such as Rummy), really lacks that remarkable mix of play-balance and sheer joy of gaming which once defined QQP products. If this is the state to which Bruce Williams and Co. are to be reduced, perhaps it's better that they move on. If American Laser Games has any sense, they'll release an SVGA Windows 95 version of SOLITAIRE'S JOURNEY, and maybe include Bridge Olympiad and Rummy on the same CD. That would certainly be a more fitting legacy for QQP than CARD PLAYERS DESERT—I mean PARADISE, of course.

CG TIPS!

▶ Boy, are the computer opponents aggressive in CARD PLAYERS PARADISE! Playing it too close to the vest in Rummy can leave you behind in a hurry. But don't despair: just play more tricks as three and four-of-a kind, which will frustrate your silicon opponents—who prefer (like my late great-aunt Dora Mae) to play long "melds" of a series (2,3,4,5,6 of hearts, for example). As the AI gets closer to going out, it tends to discard high cards. Patience usually rewards you with a high spread of aces or face cards.

▶ An alternative method to winning in Rummy can be to simply hold cards, only placing them when you have two or three runs. The advantage is that your opponent has nothing to play off of, but if you get caught with all those cards!... I would use this strategy against a human only via modem, and only if I were way behind.

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Don't Be Square

I'm Good Enough, I'm Smart Enough, And Doggone It, People Like Me

by Charles Ardai

I'm surprised that more computer games don't turn out like ENDORFUN, given that most of them come from California. It's also a good thing; I can't be the only one who finds New Age philosophy hard to swallow. Daily affirmations and computer games mix about as well as Beef Wellington and Jell-O.



GROOVE TUBE ENDORFUN might be the first self-actualizing computer game, with lava-lamp background art to boot.

If Erno Rubik (of the cube) and SNL's self-help guru, Stuart Smalley, designed a game together, they might come up with a similar product. While you maneuver a multicolored cube around the playing grid, ENDORFUN barrages you with "motivational" messages spelled out on the screen, muttered over the soundtrack, and inserted subliminally into the music. Whether ENDORFUN included pearls of wisdom such as "I am free of dependency" and "I love myself the way I am" to encourage or to distract players remains open to speculation.

You can axe the subliminal messages by turning off the music, suffering no great loss either way. You're stuck with everything else.

What does all this mushy self-love have to do with a Rubik-style puzzle game?

Nothing. But if you want to play the game, you better get used to it.

PUT THE BEST FACE ON IT

You move the cube around the grid by turning it end over end in the four basic compass directions. Each time you turn the cube, a different color appears on the exposed face. After starting a given level, colored squares begin to randomly populate the mostly bare grid. You must direct your cube so that the top face shows the same color as an occupied square. Successfully landing on a colored "block" will remove it from the grid and allow you to continue your progress.

Play continues until the timer runs out, the colored blocks trap your cube into an inescapable position, or you clear all blocks from the screen. Depending on which of the three variations you choose, you can score points for removing blocks, clearing a grid quickly, or length of playtime.

Although simple, ENDORFUN doesn't have the hyper-simplicity of the best puzzle games, like TETRIS. But it becomes addictive. What starts out awkward quickly becomes intuitive. Once you can move without consciously calculating the sequence of turns necessary to land on a given block, roaming around the grid becomes quite enjoyable.

SOUND OFF

Enjoyable, that is, until a level ends, and we're back in fruitcake land. "Your body functions perfectly," the computer tells me. Oh, yeah? I have a cold.

"Your body heals itself."

"Bite me," I say, reaching for a Kleenex.

"I create joyous creation," it whispers subliminally. "I forgive myself. I am divinely guided. I create miracles."

I think not. What it creates is the queasy sensation of being indoctrinated by the crunchiest of all granola factions.

"I am divinely guided?" "I choose life?" How would the well-meaning souls behind Endorfun feel if their right-wing counterparts marketed a game containing subliminal messages such as "I accept Jesus as my personal savior," "I choose right-to-life," or "I draw pride from the supremacy of my race?"

"Oh, but that's different," they'd cry. Sure, just like your left shoe is different from your right. The shoe would just be on the other foot.

Game designers should stick to designing games; If there is an appropriate place for this feel-good dogma, it's not here.



Price: $29.95
System Requirements: IBM 486-66 or better processor, Win 3.1 or Win 95, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 2.5 MB hard drive space, 2 x CD-ROM, Windows compatible sound card, mouse.
Protection: None
Designer: Onesong Partners, Inc.
Publisher: Time Warner Interactive
Burbank, CA
(800) 482-3766
Reader Service #: 337

APPEAL: If you insist on light games with a "message," this might be your cup of herbal tea.

PROS: Simple to play, and it grows on you once you master the basic moves.

CONS: Psychedelic background art, bongos on the soundtrack, levels named "Karma" and "Flower Crystal"...all this and subliminal messages, too!

CG RATED

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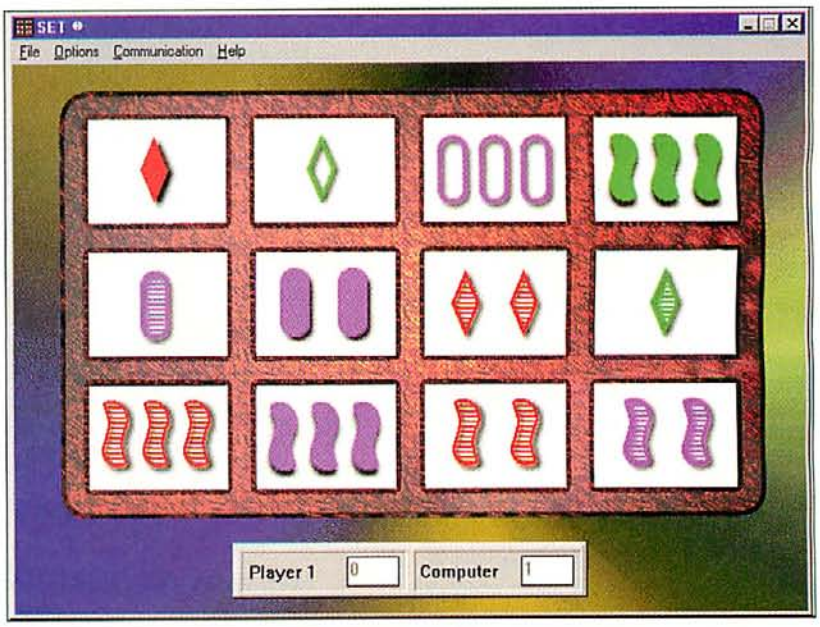
DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Match Play

Scrawny SET Will Garner More Respect Than Enjoyment

by Charles Ardai

Beware the scrawny guy in the pool hall, the one with coke-bottle lenses, sloping shoulders, and hands that look like they've never held a cue. Same thing here: beware SET. Rarely has a game looked scrawnier. The self-published brainchild of a one-time geneticist, SET has "amateur" written all over it. The screen shots and logo on the box are out of focus. The game's soundtrack is a mishmash of audio clip art: a New Age fanfare when you start the game, an exuberant "Yeah!" when you do something right, a gurgling "Aaargh!" when you do something wrong. The screen layout is remarkably plain, even for a computerized card game. The whole thing looks as sturdy as a wet piñata, and roughly as much fun.



POLYAGONY Challenging but unfriendly, this game seems aimed more toward the Mensa "set" than the puzzle/classic gamer.



Price: $34.95
System Requirements: PC compatible 386 or better, Windows 3.1 or Win '95, VGA graphics, 2 MB hard drive space, mouse; supports Sound Blaster and compatibles.
of Players: 1-10 (hot-seat and modem)
Designer: Mercury Software
Publisher: Set Enterprises, Inc.
15402 E. Verbena Drive
Fountain Hills, AZ 85268
(No telephone orders)
Reader Service #: 338

READY...SET...

How hard can a game be when it looks so flimsy—especially when it only has one rule? Well, here the rule is that you have to select sets of three cards out of twelve shown on the screen, such that each of the cards' four characteristics—color, shape, number, and shading—either match or don't match.

"Match" means that a given characteristic is the same on all three cards: for instance, that all the cards feature green shapes, rather than red or purple shapes; or that all the cards feature ovals, rather than diamonds or squiggles. "Don't match" means that a given characteristic is different on each card: for instance, that the cards feature one shape, two shapes, and three shapes, respectively, or solid shapes, striped shapes, and open shapes.

It's difficult holding all four characteristics in your head at once, especially when you can't make a set out of two cards that match and a third that doesn't. You may find three cards that are all the same color and all have three shapes, but notice too late that two of the cards feature diamonds while the third features ovals. As they say...Aaargh.

Making matters worse, the computer is watching over your shoulder, picking out the sets for you as a timer ticks away. (You may also have a human opponent, either hot seat or linked in by modem, racing with you to find the sets.) Stare for too long at any one arrangement of cards and you feel your opportunity slipping away. You can't afford to panic, since that's when the cards start dancing before your eyes and you start picking false sets, one after another, losing a point for each mistake.

SET is really, really hard. Unless you enjoy detecting quadravariable patterns at a glance, you'll get frustrated. And I suspect, even logicians and the mathematically inclined will respect SET more than they enjoy it. Personally, I left feeling like something of a wet piñata. For those who cherish that feeling, SET provides it in spades.

APPEAL: Only for die-hard fans of the puzzle pages in *Scientific American*.

PROS: A tough symbol-matching card game with enough play variations and subtlety to earn your respect.

CONS: Difficult and visually plain, lacks the spark to make it much fun.

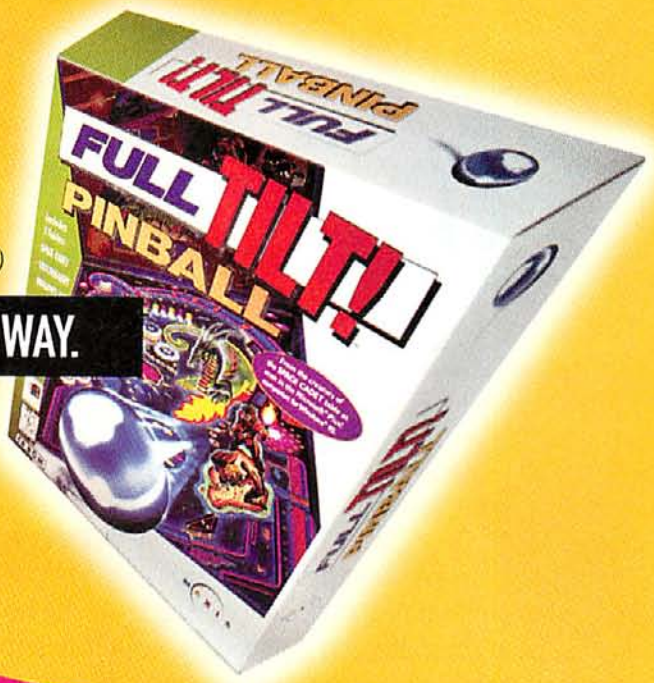
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(figure 1)

THE HARD WAY.

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(figure 2)

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MAXIS

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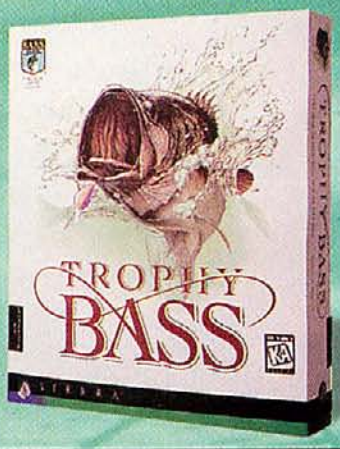
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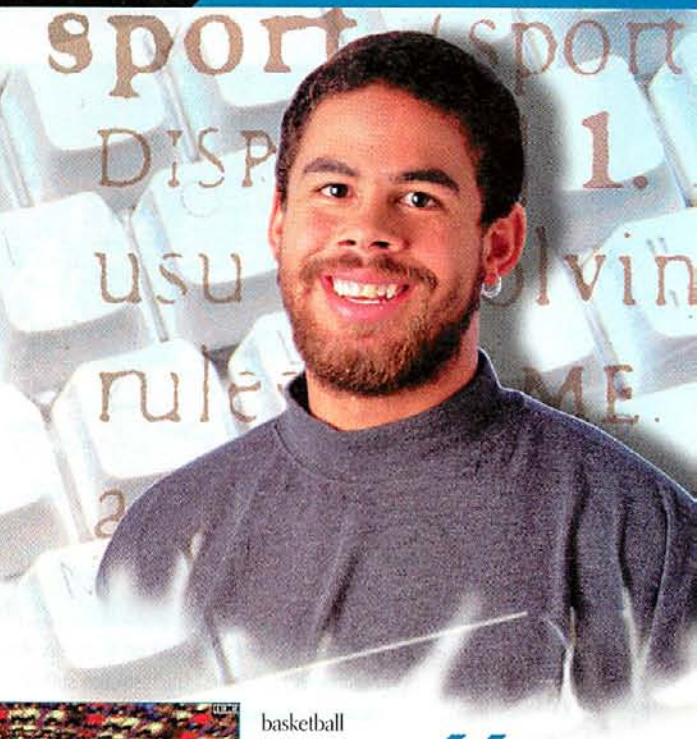
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Circle Reader Service #156

NBA Kicks in 1996

Electronic Arts Makes The Best Hoops Game, NBA Live 95, Even Better



The sight of a grown man crying ain't pretty. Or even a grown-up little boy. But I confess to tears of joy when EA Sports' conversion of NBA Live '95 to the PC platform hit my hands last spring. For too many years, basketball games on the PC had been a vast wasteland. NBA Live '95 was the virtual promised land. Great graphics and a gameplay model that felt more like basketball than any game I've ever played made this title a runaway smash.

Like the initial release (and subsequent sequels) of its hockey counterpart, NHL Hockey, NBA Live had its fair share of problems—faulty AI and fairly useless high-resolution mode are two examples. But the action was so refreshingly enjoyable that it was easy to overlook these flaws. Being able to Play The Game is what it's all about, and here, finally, was a basketball game we could *play*.



ABOVE THE RIM NBA Live '96 improves upon the high-flyin', in-your-face action of its predecessor.

It should come as no surprise that even as NBA Live hit the best seller charts (phenomenal for a sports game), Electronic Arts was already drawing up a sequel. For fans of EA Sports games, this comes as even less of a surprise (how many years has John Madden been in evolution now—four, five?). But this sequel is a far cry from your standard "update the players' stats, and tweak the code" update. NBA Live '96, as those Manwich commercials used to say, is something meatier.

> "NBA Live '96 boasts the same revolutionary graphics engine used in the latest release of NHL Hockey"

YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION?

NBA Live '96 boasts the same revolutionary graphics engine used in the latest release of NHL Hockey. This means a three-dimensional court, with multiple views from five different camera angles. You can even play from an on-the-court

ON DECK

In the non-interactive demo of Front Page Sports Baseball '96, a photograph of one of the stadiums includes a billboard with an advertisement for "Front Page Sports Basketball '97." Sierra neither confirmed nor denied this project, but we were able to squeeze them into saying "if we did do another FPS title, it would be basketball."

Mindscape's NCAA Football title has been bumped into the late 1996 time-frame. The development team "really wants to get it right," so they're going back to the drawing board to ensure this promising college football title, which will include most major NCAA football programs, meets its potential.

On the subject of football, John Madden Football for the PC, by EA Sports, has also been moved back, to the April time-frame.

Electronic Arts is also close to releasing a course disk for PGA Tour '96. The New course disk takes you to the Links at Spanish Bay. Check for it in the early spring.



FLOOR GENERAL You can get as up close and personal to the action as you want, although the players' fine resolution suffers a bit as a result.

perspective (not easily, though). You switch perspectives on the fly by hitting keys 1 through 5 atop your keyboard. To switch between Sky Cam I, II and III you hit "2" multiple times. Some perspectives, much like in HOCKEY, are better suited for gameplay—I still haven't figured out which I'm most comfortable with—while others are more appropriate for reliving those high-flying, "best-of" moments.

Besides looking good, one other bonus of the new camera angles is that, for the NBA LIVE veteran, it takes a little longer to master the action, increasing the lifespan of the game.

Other graphical elements besides the on-court perspective have changed as well. Three different resolution modes (320 x 200, 640 x 320, 640 x 480) are included, although you'll need a Pentium for the highest resolution, which is gorgeous. As of the prerelease version we played, however, the players were surprisingly blocky in the more close-up views—much more so than their HOCKEY counterparts. But their animations are amazing (not that they weren't amazing before). Tip-ins, spin dribbles and several other new moves will blow gamers away.

BASELINE DRIVE

NBA LIVE's action, of course, remains top notch. EA Sports listened hard to fans

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of the '95 version and have made this version even more intuitive, easy to use and fun.

The gameplay is basically the same—you control the man with the ball. One button passes, one button shoots, and the turbo button makes you go real fast. New features include Quick Plays, which allow you to call offensive and defensive plays on the fly, rather than waiting for a dead ball. You can even successfully call for intentional fouls now.

The Artificial Intelligence, one of NBA LIVE '95's weakest spots, has also been improved significantly. End-of-game breakdowns, like dribbling the ball for a full 20 seconds before shooting when down or taking lay-ups when down three, have been eliminated for the most part. And EA Sports is promising a much more challenging game of computer hoops. The game did seem harder than before, but its too early to tell whether that's because of the new graphical engine or an improved AI.

Gravis Grip support has been built in. This means that up to four players can play simultaneously, each *with your own joystick*, with the Gravis Grip module.

Other enhancements include a new free throw model (the crowd comes into play), shot summary diagrams, power dunks, the ability to create custom players and animated play diagrams, and the Vancouver and Toronto expansion teams.

BACK TO BACK

With NBA LIVE being the only game in town, it would have been entirely too easy for the folks at EA Sports to rest on their laurels, make a few minor tweaks to the game engine and call it a day. This aggressive pursuit of excellence is commendable, and illustrates why, when it comes to computer (and video) sports games, they're the last word.

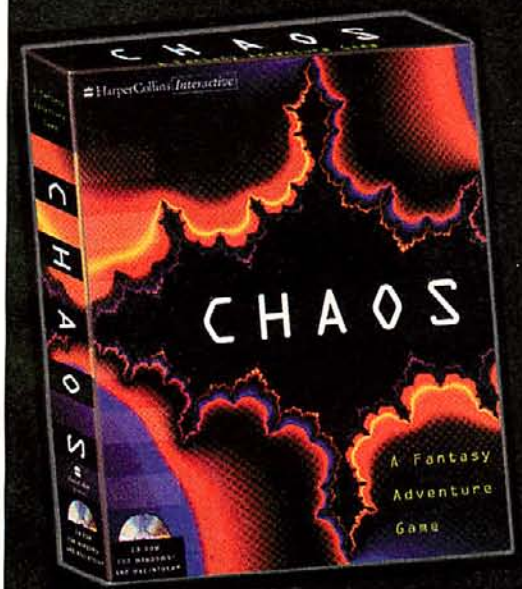
I played an 82-game season in NBA LIVE '95 faster than humanly possible last season. Looks like I'll be playing through even faster this year.

CG TIPS!

NBA.COM (http://www.nba.com) is a marvelous site put together by the National Basketball Association. It contains profiles for every team in the league, AVI files of your favorite players in action, and full season and career statistics on most players in the league.

Rotisserie league fans should check out the SmallWorld site (http://www.smallworld.com/), a fantasy leaguer's dream come true. This site has fantasy sports leagues for most major league sports as well as hockey.

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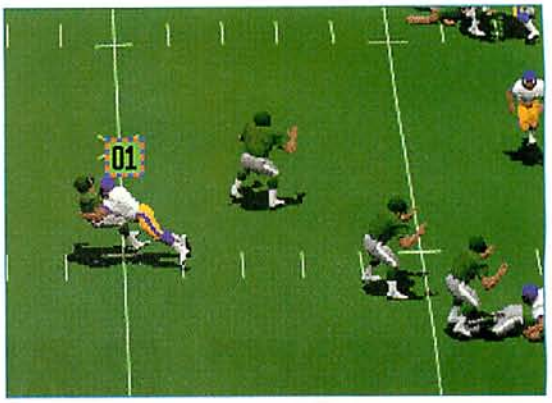
FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '96 Continues Its Dominance, But Age Is Taking Its Toll

Dennis McCauley

Back in the days when the New York Yankees' dominance of the diamond was absolute, a sports pundit wrote that rooting for this team was like cheering for U.S. Steel. That's because, much like a corporate giant, the methodical men in blue pin stripes steamrolled the opposition year after year. That, of course, was long ago. A similar situation exists today in the realm of pro football, and I'm not talking about the San Francisco 49ers (certainly not anymore) or the Dallas Cowboys, but FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '96, a title that has run circles around its competition every fall since its release in 1992.

This year, unfortunately, nothing's changed. No other gridiron offering has risen to FOOTBALL PRO's challenge, and the 1996 version still leads the pack. I say unfortunately because competition is a good thing—there's no bigger incentive than one or two competitors nipping at your heels. Might the current lack of competition be responsible for the cracks starting to form in FRONT PAGE FOOTBALL'S shiny helmet?

Let's be clear about one thing. FPSFP'96 is still the best pigskin sim on the market. And the quality of this year's version will come as no surprise to gamers who enjoyed last year's version, which earned five stars on these very pages and has been Sports Game of the Year for 3 years running. But here's a tough question: if you've already got the '95 edition, do you really need '96?



SACK ATTACK! High-resolution graphics mean you can really feel the hits in FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '96.

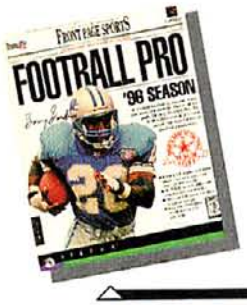
WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

Like its older siblings, FOOTBALL PRO '96 offers gameplay options such as exhibition games and single season or career league play. Players can choose to act as coach, general manager, or both. Or you can grab the joystick and hit the field—and your opponents—yourself.

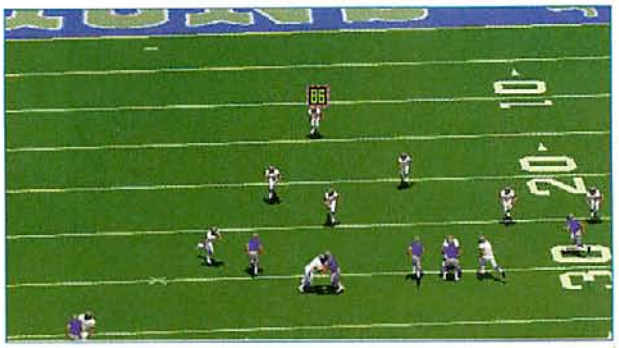
On a disappointing note, modem play once again didn't make the cut. That's too bad; most of FPSFP's changes are evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, and a well-done modem option would have rattled more than a few cages on the sports gaming scene. If you want online football action, it'll have to be UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS '96 or the Imagination Network's version of FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO.

If you played FPSFP '95, you've seen the bulk of what '96 has to offer. The interface, league management tools, play editor, coaching profiles and gameplay remain largely unchanged. While Sierra touts improved artificial intelligence routines for quarterbacks and offensive linemen, veteran players will mostly notice improvement in the graphics, and uh, well, the graphics. For a more realistic look, the FRONT PAGE SPORTS team utilized motion capture technology to digitize the movement of real players. The result? FOOTBALL PRO '96 is the best-looking football game yet to emerge from the tunnel.

Of course, footballs take crazy

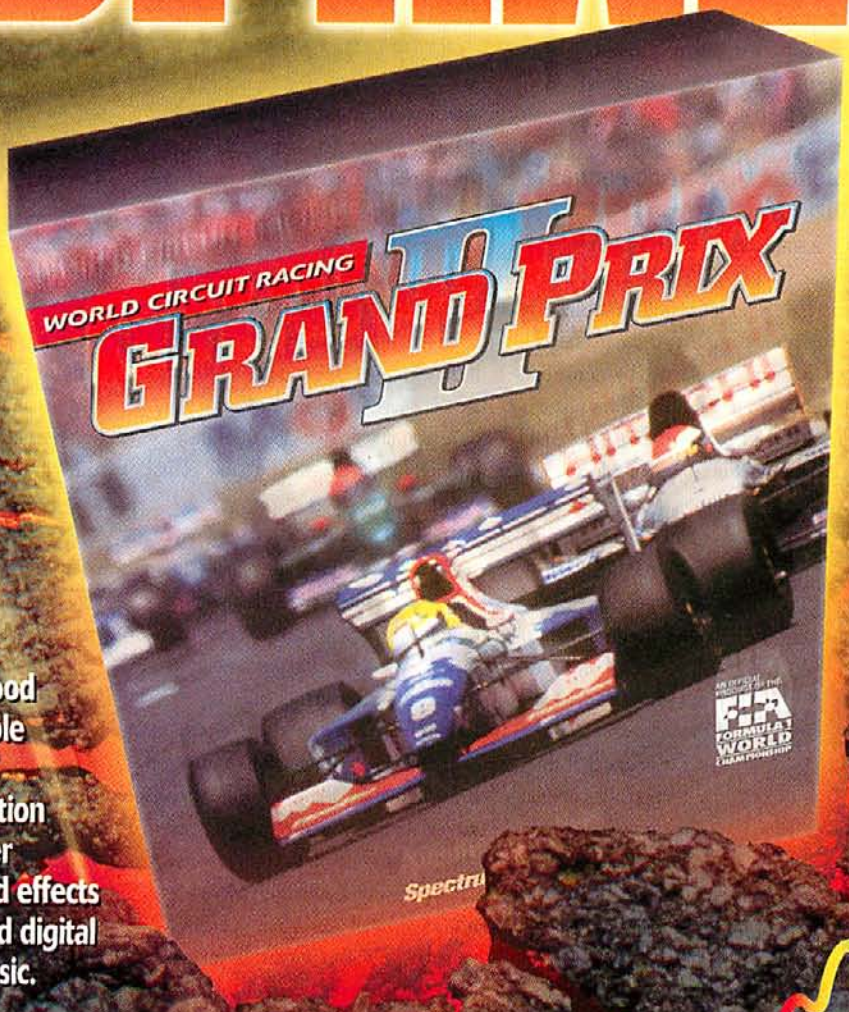


Price: $59.95
System Requirements: 486 66MHz (Pentium recommended), 8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), SVGA graphics, 10 MB hard drive space; 2x CD-ROM drive; supports Sound Blaster and compatibles.
of Players: 1-2
Designer: Dynamix
Publisher: Sierra
Bellevue, Washington
(800) 757-7707
http://www.sierra.com
Reader Service #: 339



KICKING IT FPSFP's kicking games are a little skewed; there are way too many missed field goals and punt return touchdowns, and no kickoff return touchdowns.

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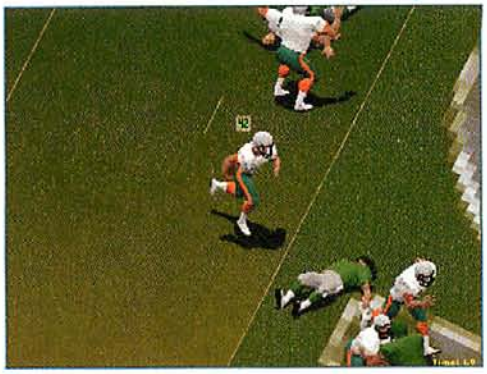
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bounces, and so, apparently, do football game animations. Ball carriers on occasion appear down by contact inside the five-yard line, but somehow still manage to score a touchdown. And occasionally a fumble recovery by a team will be completely disregarded. I thought the replacement officials were in the NBA...

In general, though, the on-screen action in FOOTBALL is quite consistent with play results, and has the fast-paced look of real NFL action.



ZOOM LENS The CAMS system allows unlimited camera angles on the action, but also reveals some flaws in the high-res visuals.

STRONGER THAN A 300-POUND LINEMAN

For some however, the FOOTBALL PRO season may get off to a rocky start. Some users have reported sound problems, like missing crowd noises and sound effects. Others have been plagued by mouse difficulties. And after completing my first simulated Super Bowl, the program asked if I wanted to see the championship animation. I said yes, but the game said no, crashing back to DOS and taking Super Bowl results and statistics with it. To their credit, Sierra has quickly released a patch that addresses a number of issues. Still, this is a disappointing opening drive for a game system that has set the standard for football sims in recent years.

COMMISSIONER, COMMISSIONER

Happily, FPSFP's league play still works just fine. Games can be played or simulated, with simmed games available in two flavors. Fast sims zip by in a heartbeat, but their speed is purchased at a price of statistical accuracy. Slower sims yield more realistic results, but can take ten minutes or more per game, making a seasonal replay a project for a long weekend (on a Pentium-66, an hour per week was the norm).

The game's trade AI seems much improved over last year. No longer will computer opponents swap their starting halfback for your backup punter. Trades are still on a one-for-one basis, so if you were planning on swinging that blockbuster multiplayer deal, you're out of luck.

CAREER PLANS

FOOTBALL PRO vets know that career leagues form the heart of the game's system, and this aspect remains a winner. Pick your franchise and put your draft strategy to work, carefully building a dynasty (you hope). Send your players to camp, allocating training time to develop the skills that you think are the keys to victory. Make trades, sign free agents, and put no-talent stiffs on the waiver wire. Then play your season schedule, and get ready to do it all over again, replacing retired players and combing through the rookies and retreads available in the college and supplemental drafts. Last year's problems with the draft pool appear to have been rectified, with a sufficient number of players available to flesh out rosters and make up for player attrition.

CAMS (Camera Angle Management System) still allows you to enjoy FPSFP '96's marvelous graphics and animations. The ultimate in viewing systems, CAMS allows coaches near-infinite flexibility in watching games. You can zoom, pan and tilt to your heart's content, saving effective new viewing angles you've created.

Coaches can save and swap highlight films, and the game also provides a screen capture utility which saves the images in BMP format.

END ZONE PUSH

What does Sierra need to do if they want to stay ahead of the pack with future versions? That's open to debate, but the aforementioned modem play is a must, along with perhaps a salary cap feature that would impact team management much as it does in the real NFL.

After years of roughing up the competition, FOOTBALL PRO '96 certainly can't be considered a diamond in the rough. Although it's a tried and true game system that has once again been dressed up in fancy new clothes, an assortment of bugs makes this year's version more like a flawed ten-carat diamond. While some might take Sierra to task for standing pat with the game's basics, it's hard to argue with a track record as convincing as this series'.

The bottom line is this: If you're considering FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '96, don't expect too many differences from last year, aside from the exceptional graphics. Owners of the 95 edition will have to decide whether the improved look is worth the investment. First time buyers or owners of older editions, however, should look no further than FOOTBALL PRO '96. Warts and all, its still the best of the bunch, by far.

APPEAL: For rookies to football sims, FPSFP '96 is a no brainer; veterans might want to think twice—is the new, admittedly gorgeous, facelift worth the money?

PROS: Brilliant graphics, incredible player animations, game and league management systems that are tried and true.

CONS: Assorted installation difficulties, mouse control bugs, temperamental game sounds, not much other than cosmetics to distinguish it from last year's model.

CG RATED

NFL Swami?

Taking the Swami cap off of Chris Berman's (of ESPN fame) head and putting it on the dome of FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '96 proves one thing: neither is any good at predicting what will happen over the course of a *real* NFL season. One mark of a good simulation is how authentically it replays seasons. Here FPSFP '96 did a reasonably fair job. Two huge surprises were the Carolina Panthers (!) making the playoffs, and Tampa Bays' surprising playoff run—they made it in with an 8-8 wildcard record and managed to upset the Dallas Cowboys in the second round of the playoff. San Francisco cruised into the Super Bowl by blowing out Tampa Bay, and Miami did the same by crushing the Kansas City Chiefs. 49er fans might get some condolence in the Front Page Sports Super Bowl. Miami couldn't hold onto a 6-0 halftime lead (blame a crucial third down pass interference call in the fourth quarter) and lost to the 49er's, 7-6.

The Green Bay Packers? Didn't even make the playoffs. Guess Brett Favre can't light up the league every year.

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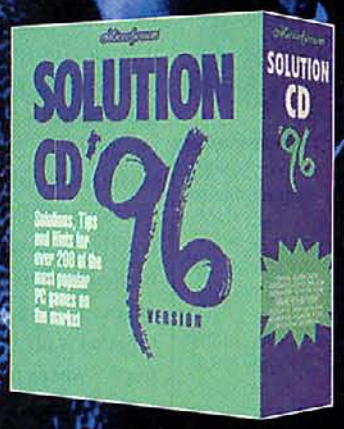
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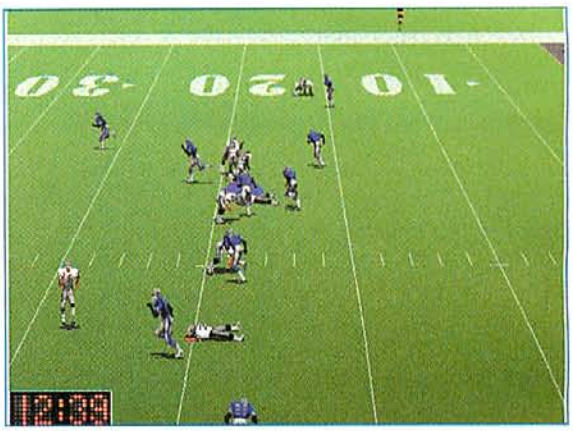
Circle Reader Service #131

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Back In The Running

Unnecessary Roughness '96 Rebounds From A Rough 1995 Season, But Still Has Room For Improvement

by Jim Gindin

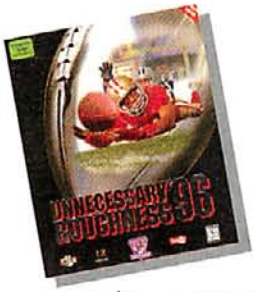


INTENTIONAL GROUNDING Unnecessary Roughness '96 excels on the ground level; running the ball is intuitive and easy.

Last season, "Unnecessary Roughness," or maybe even "Brutality" would have been an appropriate headline for this review. Back then, as some of you might (painfully) remember, Accolade unleashed a pretty, but extremely buggy action-oriented football game just in time for the 1994 Christmas shop-a-thon. 1996, Accolade promised, would be a comeback season for this pigskin title. And right they are.

Oh sure, UR '96 still has a lot of flaws and lacks some polish. There are misspelled words (*Unnecessary Roughness* is even spelled wrong on one penalty screen) and the instant replay interface is as easy to understand as the control panel of a DC-10. The entire passing game is now chiefly an exercise in futility, and there are frequent mistakes in how statistics are calculated and credited.

But somehow, despite a host of problems, UR '96 entertains, chiefly because of its excellent implementation of the NFL ground attack. I've had great fun putting together a playbook of my favorite traps, sweeps and pitches. If I'm lucky enough to stay away from injuries and the defense isn't particularly strong, I can gain up to 500 rushing yards on about 80 or 90 carries per contest. Okay, so it's not exactly realistic. But it feels realistic, and more importantly, it's fun.



Price: $69.95
System Requirements: 486DX-66, 8 MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM, local bus video card and 16 MB RAM recommended, SVGA graphics, joystick; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards
Players: 1 or 2 (modem play not supported)
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Gene Smith
Publisher: Accolade
San Jose, CA
(800) 245-7744
***Reader Service:* #340**

GROUND TO A PULP

Maybe the reason I enjoyed running the ball is because it is possibly the only intuitive portion of the game. Or maybe because it's so darn easy. Racking up obscene rushing numbers is possible, in part, because the defensive AI is not trained to recognize play-calling. Even if you've run a sweep on first down 25 consecutive times, the computer isn't any more likely to call a 5-2 stack defense. It sticks to the selected playbook's previously allocated percentages assigned to each play based on down, quarter, yardage and score, and is completely unable to make such intuitive adjustments. Even if the correct defense is selected, UR '96 still doesn't stand a much greater chance of stopping the play, unfortunately, as long as you're controlling the ball carrier.

Computer-controlled teams, on the other hand, can't use the run offense as effectively; the ball carrier never deviates from the assigned play path. Even if that means running smack into the safety blitz.

1ST DEGREE OFFENSE

The computer teams don't just roll over and lose, however. Their running game, as inflexible as it is, is not exactly shabby, and the computer quarterbacks can pass, pass, pass. In some games, these little digital signal-callers are inhuman. Just when you think you're about to pound one of them into the turf, they float a perfect 15-yard completion to the tight end, and there's not much you can do about it. In general, they're that good.

In the last incarnation of Unnecessary Roughness, a safety blitz proved devastating. It would completely shut down the run, garner frequent sacks, and if the quarterback did manage to get rid of the ball, you could always switch control to a defensive back and flatten the receiver, an action that only occasionally resulted in a pass interference call.

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TWO IF BY AIR... Beautiful high-resolution graphics and multiple camera angles don't make passing the ball any easier in UR '96.

UR '96 addresses this by decreasing your ability to switch quickly to a pass defender. Blocking schemes require less accuracy as well; your blitzer gets held up at the line more often, sometimes bouncing a few pixels right or left so the block holds, even though it looks absurd. The quarterback knows how to let the pass go just before the sack, too. In this case, less control makes the game more competitive. But the increased advantage given to offense makes playing defense a little less fun—and the scores a little higher than normal.

If the computer team simply passed on every down, it would be hard to beat. It will, however, stick to the percentages in the playbook, and call some runs—even on third down in crucial situations. Then your blitzing safety wreaks havoc, because in UR '96 the secondary rules the roost. Defensive linemen tackle about as well as medicine balls—all they do is bounce off ball carriers. The linebackers are a little better, with the top ones as good as anyone. But the safeties and cornerbacks dominate. Not even O.J.'s lawyers could get you out of their grasp.

Both you and the computer can take advantage of the "Oomph" button, a nifty new feature. Depending on how you set it, pressing this button causes the ball carrier to dive, spin or hurdle. This is a nice addition that creates some memorable replays.

VISUALS

Graphically, UR '96 gets mixed reviews. It provides a smooth, quality picture with generous and realistic looking players, with clearly visible uniform numbers. Unlike its predecessor, you can see tackles and certain types of movement. However, the frame rate is still pretty low. When a pass reaches a receiver, the ball simply disappears into the crowd. If the ball

Season of the Weak

Just as we did with FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '96 (see previous review), we decided to test UR '96's psychic pigskin abilities by running a simulated season on autoplay. An hour later (compared to FPSFP's weekend), we had the results.

No surprises initially—Dallas dominated the league with a 15-1 record. San Francisco, meanwhile stumbled to a 12-4 finish. Detroit, on the other hand, finished a strong 13-3. Dark horse surprises were the Buccaneers at 11-5 and making the playoffs, and the Arizona Cardinals at 11-5. Green Bay, once again, didn't even make the playoffs.

In the AFC, Kansas City strong-armed the league with a 13-3 record, while New England and Indianapolis posted 11-5 records. Steeler fans will be sorry to know that in the offensively-minded UR '96 league, their Pittsburgh team didn't even qualify for the post season.

Once the playoffs started, however, conventional wisdom went out the door. Detroit coasted into the Super Bowl by beating San Francisco (48-15) and Dallas (31-20). On the AFC side of the playoffs, it was all New England—they blew out Denver and squeaked by the heavily-favored Chiefs (13-12).

The Super Bowl was a shoot-out. Both teams traded knockout punches for four quarters, but in the end Drew Bledsoe's (38-62, 402 yards, 4 TDs) 42 yard bomb to Vincent Brisby with three minutes left in the game set New England on the path to their 39-32 victory. Barry Sanders was held to only 89 yards rushing on 24 carries, and Scott Mitchell's 320 yards passing were overshadowed by three costly interceptions.

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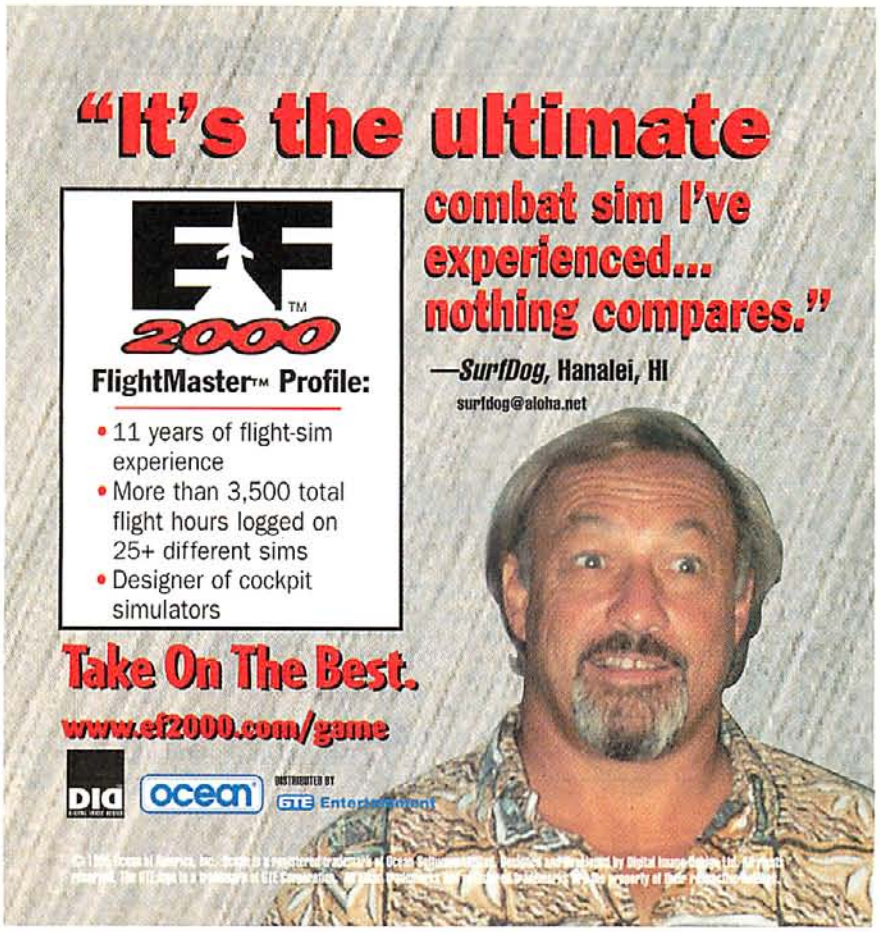
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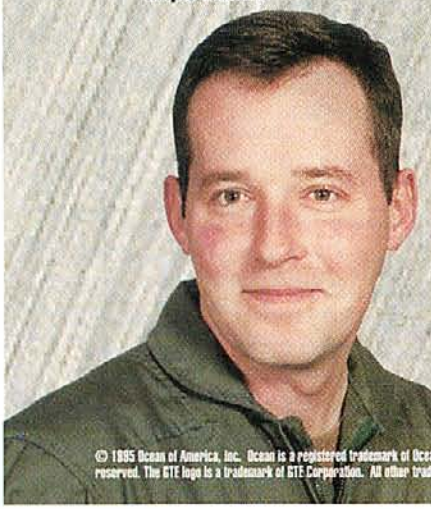
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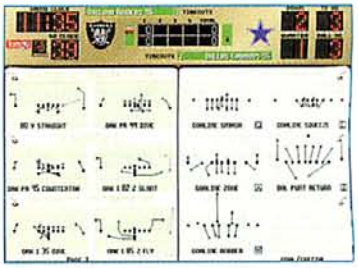
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PLAYING BOOKIE UR '96 boasts a friendly, easy-to-use playbook that's completely customizable.

bounces around like a teenager at a Courtney Love concert, you know it is incomplete. If the game pauses and the word "Interception" appears on top of one of the defenders, well...If neither happens, congratulations!—you've completed a pass.

Not that you'll be experiencing this thrill all too often. Passing at the game's toughest levels is about as entertaining as the usual Super Bowl blowout. When you pop into passing mode, the three primary receivers are depicted in little windows at the top of the screen. Forget about determining whether the players are open.—the resolution doesn't allow for that—just pass the ball and hope for the best. Making things even harder, on the toughest level, you even have to move the receiver to meet the pass. I tried this a hundred times before I completed one, and I was so thrilled with my accomplishment I didn't even mind throwing another 50 straight incompletions.

NOT SO BAD AT NUMBERS

UR '96's statistical model is much improved over last year's version, which featured 4,000-yard rushers and way too much passing yardage. Rushing attempts are held down by a fatigue system that heavily penalizes those who dare send Barry Sanders on 15 consecutive sweeps. You can still rack up the running yardage, of course, but you have to spread the ball around a bit more. Computer quarterbacks are another story, however and can

still abuse the system if given the chance. They're hard to tackle, and thus never injured or much fatigued.

It's also literally impossible to return a kick or punt for a touchdown, or even gain more than 20 yards a return. And the kicking game is a bit funny. With Green Bay's Chris Jacke, for example, I never missed 59-yard field goal attempts as long as I gauged the cross wind correctly. But I never hit a 61-yarder.

UR '96 also provides some limited league function. You need to play using 30-team leagues and a 17-week schedule, but you can sign free agents when players are injured, edit players, and create teams from scratch. There's even a salary cap that, like its real-life counterpart, affects nothing. FRONT PAGE SPORTS fans will be disappointed at the lack of career leagues.

The play editing and creation module is flexible, fairly powerful and enjoyable.

FROM OUT-HOUSE TO CONTENDER

In all, this is a nice-looking game that provides an entertaining simulation of the NFL's rushing game, and not a whole lot more. It's a decent, albeit weak competitor of the FRONT PAGE SPORTS series. If Accolade can find a way to increase the frame rate and make passing fun, or even doable, again, UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS '96 could be the base for a great series of action-oriented football games.

TARGET AUDIENCE: For football fans who want to play the game, UR '96 is your only choice. Sim fans will want to check elsewhere.

PROS: Nice-looking SVGA graphics and a fantastic running game.

CONS: Difficult passing, graphical idiosyncrasies and some out-of-tune AI.

CG RATED

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

The Grating One

Time Warner's Fast-Paced Version Of WAYNE GRETZKY HOCKEY Offers More Chills Than Thrills

by Gordon Goble

It's 1996, and the Great One has seen fit to re-enter the world of computerized hockey (after three classic Bethesda titles) through Time Warner's offering, WAYNE GRETZKY AND THE NHLPA ALL-STARS. Why here, and why now? Well, to be honest, I'm not really sure. Besides being an almost embarrassing homage to His Greatness, GRETZKY HOCKEY is nowhere near a great game. In fact, it's downright mediocre.

FACE-OFF

Although the game's introduction has all the flair of Grandma tickling the ivories of the local church Wurlitzer, GRETZKY—thankfully—does get better before it gets worse. A number of options are at your disposal, from mode of play (regular season, playoffs, tournament, and practice) to a roster section where trades can be made and teams constructed from scratch. Standard gameplay preferences such as fighting, face-offs, ability levels, period length (2 to 20 minutes), penalties, and simulation vs. arcade gameplay are all included.

Practice mode is a particularly nice touch. Here, face-offs (which are better depicted here than in any other hockey game), passing and shootout strategies may be rehearsed *ad infinitum*.

Unfortunately, GRETZKY is up against a bit of a stumbling block in that it is licensed by the NHL Player's Association but not the NHL. Therefore, players like Bondra and Juneau are on a team from Washington, but that team is not the Capitals. Considering the other products out there that have dual licensing (like NHL HOCKEY 96), this hockey sim suffers even more in comparison.



Price: $49.99
System Requirements: 486 DX-50 IBM PC compatible, 4 MB RAM (8 recommended), 10 MB hard disk space, SVGA card, 2x CD-ROM drive; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards.
of Players: 1-2
Protection: None
Designer: Peter Adams, Mitzi McGilvray
Publisher: Time Warner Interactive
Hollywood, CA
(800) 482-3766
Reader Service #: 341

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Once you hit the ice, you'll soon find that "Simulation" vs. "Arcade" merely determines whether the officials blow the whistle on infractions. Gameplay itself doesn't change, contrary to the box claim that the "simulation mode is serious hockey." The "Style of Play" option, a choice between aggressive, defensive and rough, is a nice idea but it doesn't make much difference.

On the ice, a panning rinkside perspective immediately shows you GRETZKY's out-of-sync scale modeling. Put it this way: if an Eric Lindros doubled in size overnight and suddenly populated every team, the scale would be about right.

But the real problem here is the severely out-of-whack game speed. Everything happens way too fast. During one particularly confusing *ten-second* outburst, I shot the puck from one end of the rink to the other, where four guys bashed into each other in the corner; I was able to free the puck, pass for a quick shot attempt, get the rebound, and attempt another shot. *Then* about six guys creamed each other in front of the net and the opposition moved down the ice, where they attempted a shot of their own. Yowzers.

It didn't help that the accompanying audio came across like an old Nintendo Entertainment System game. It also didn't help when the announcer referred to Russ Courtnall and Al MacInnis as "Russell" and "Allen." Nor did it further the game's realism when he continually referred to "Offside" as "Offsides."



PUCK OFF GRETZKY's got the best face-off mechanism in the game; unfortunately, the rest of the graphics are severely out of proportion.

DO WHAT YOU GOTTA

But when Kevin Stevens and Sylvain Turgeon were assessed fighting penalties twice in just over a single *minute*, I knew what I had to do.

Shutting off one-half of my brain (it's a gift, okay?), I became the primal hockey man, *Stickus Erectus*. I crashed and bashed and shot and scored, and you know what? I had some fun. Then I played a bit more, said "Uuurgh, uurgh, uurgh," just like that guy on Home Improvement. Then I quit, and haven't felt mean enough to play again. To be honest, I'm not sure if I ever will.

APPEAL: Smash 'em-bash 'em hockey fans might like WAYNE GRETZKY, but those looking for a little more realism will be sorely frustrated.

PROS: Fast-paced action, real NHLPA players.

CONS: Fast-paced action is unrealistic, lack of real NHL teams, and severely out-of-proportion graphics and gameplay.

CG RATED

You've Trained For This









A New World...

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Pool Party

POOL CHAMPION Adds A New Wrinkle To PC Pool

by Scott May

Some sports simulations are so caught up in realism that they forget one important ingredient: fun. Nothing will dampen a "light" game's enjoyment value more than a difficult learning curve and tons of required practice. This is what makes Mindscape's POOL CHAMPION so refreshing—it's a tantalizing blend of real-world dynamics and arcade sensibilities. The end result is a game that begs to be played "just one more time."

Though many people consider pool a mere parlor room diversion, dedicated players know it as a true sport, requiring a great deal of skill and strategy. POOL CHAMPION caters to both crowds—those in the mood for fast, fun recreation, as well as those looking for a serious simulation that may help improve their real-life game.



Price: $59.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486 DX2-66, 8 MB RAM, Windows 3.1 or higher, SVGA, 2x CD-ROM, mouse; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards.
of Players: 1-2
Protection: None
Designer: Bitmasters
Publisher: Mindscape
Novato, CA
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Reader Service: #342

THE HUSTLER

From POOL CHAMPION's main menu you can practice alone or compete against a friend or computer opponent. You can also embark on the game's underlying adventure theme, which, despite its rudimentary nature, is something I've never seen in a billiards simulation. Your goal is to earn enough money, hustling both friends and strangers, to fly to Las Vegas to compete in the National Nine Ball Tournament. You need $250 for airfare, plus another $120 to enter the tournament.

You start with $50 in your pocket and the Hustler's gleam in your eye. Your competitors' skill is determined by your location—your basement, Dave's Chopper Bar, Jim-Bob's Bar & Grill, Matt's Billiards and ultimately, Las Vegas. The kitty varies from $1 to $200, depending on your skill level and who you're playing. Each game affects your ranking and statistics, automatically updated during your adventure. Statistics include games completed, break and shot percentages, games won, scratches, and your overall prowess as a potential pool shark.

Depending on your opponent and location, available game variations include Eight Ball, Nine Ball, Ten Ball, Fifteen Ball, 14.1 Continuous and Rotation. The last two games are particularly challenging and perhaps not in the usual repertoire of most casual pool players.

The manual, though tersely written, offers detailed instructions on the object, rules, setup and penalties of each game. Except in adventure mode, all game variations and locations are available during one- or two-player competition.



HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE After lining up your shot, get a 3-D perspective of the table; the top left display allows precise control of your cue's power, elevation and striking position.

POOL SHARK

The mechanics of actual gameplay are ingeniously simple. Starting from an overhead view of the full table, you must first choose the target ball and, in some variations, call the pocket. Beginners can turn on the optional aiming lines, which show the direction of the cue ball and its potential impact on, and subsequent path of the target ball. Click the right mouse button to toggle the ball numbers on and off.

Once you've set up your shot, the screen switches to a 3-D close-up of the table, shown from the player's point of view. An inset gauge—similar to those used in most golf simulations—lets you determine the power and accuracy of your shot. You can also change the elevation of the cue and the point of contact on the cue ball in order to shoot tight from the rail or from behind other balls. As your skill increases, you can also master advanced techniques such as draws (backspin), follows (topspin), side-spins and difficult Masse shots. Unfortunately, unlike Interplay's VIRTUAL POOL there's no tutorial in the game, so you'll have to learn these techniques on your own.

THE DRAW

The graphics throughout are well drawn and colorful. Ball action is smoothly animated and extremely realistic, enhanced with the appropriate digitized sound effects. If you need to set the mood to get into the game, you can also turn on optional crowd chatter, background music and computerized taunts: "If it was against the law to be bad, this guy would be *under*

You've Assembled The Team

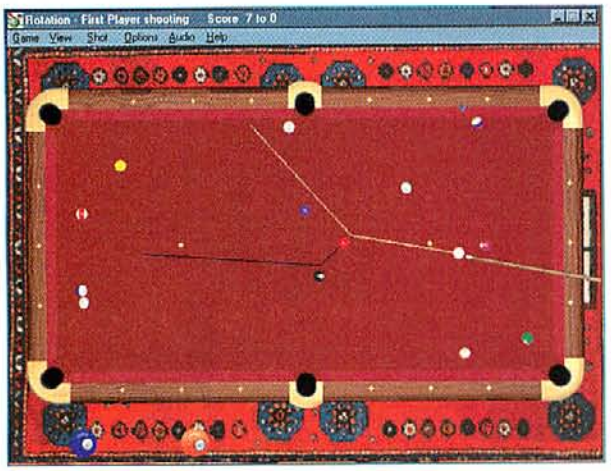








A New Hope...



ANGLE OF ATTACK An overhead view of the table, with optional aiming lines, lets you plot the best strategy to run the balls and win big bucks.

a jail," brags one seedy competitor. As usual, the best way to shut them up is to run the table, take their cash and thumb your nose as you head for the door.

Your stiffly computer-rendered opponents feature limited robotic motion and personalities ranging from dweeb to drunkard to flirt to fast-talker. As in the real world, you never know who's hustling whom until the initial break, so keep one eye on the table and the other on your wallet.

Miscellaneous expenses incurred during your pool sharking adventures include buying opponents drinks (presumably to help raise the stakes and impair their performance), purchasing your own cue stick (to improve your performance) and taking lessons from pros (such lessons only cost you money and raise your skill level; they don't actually teach you anything).

EIGHT BALL IN THE CORNER

POOL CHAMPION'S closest PC competitor is Interplay's VIRTUAL POOL, a technically brilliant title so meticulous in its execution, it occasionally miscalculates the sport's spirit of sheer fun and lively competition. POOL CHAMPION, on the other hand is more than just a game, but a bona fide adventure.

APPEAL: Pool sharks or pool hacks looking for simple billiards fun with a little depth.

PROS: Adheres to real-world table action without complicated play mechanics. Wide assortment of game variations, coupled with an innovative adventure theme, results in long-term play value.

CONS: Superfluous digitized speech could have been used to better effect, and the "Adventure Game" is not much more than a glorified tournament. No online tutorial for bare beginners. No head-to-head modem or network play.

CG RATED



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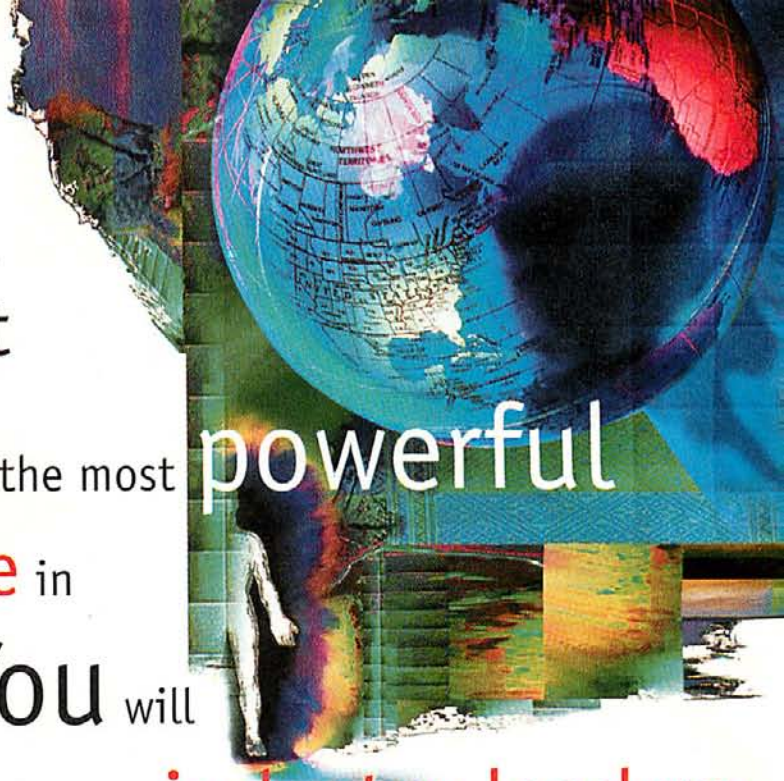
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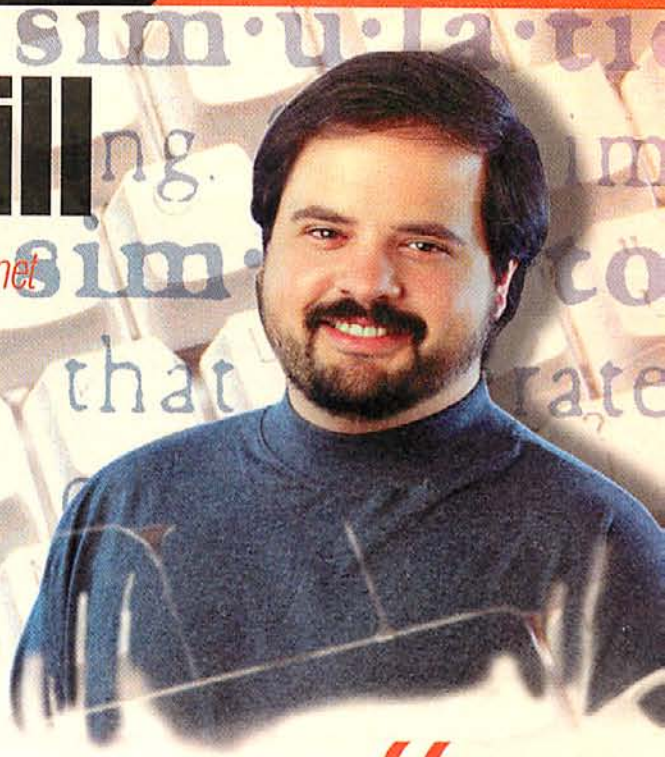
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Circle Reader Service #202

Netting A Kill

ICI's WARBIRDS Launches Air Strikes On The Internet



You're loaded for bear, and there's nothing to shoot at. That was the dilemma that used to be faced by gamers who wanted to fly against human opponents in their favorite flight sims. Unless you were lucky enough to know a nearby flight sim fan, you were generally forced to locate distant opponents using online networks. This meant hefty long-distance or online-access charges. Kesmai's AIR WARRIOR (see last month's column) gave pilots a central place to find skilled opponents, and with recent online service price drops, it's now cheaper to play than calling a head-to-head opponent on a long-distance line.

Last year a group of former AIR WARRIOR players banded together and decided to give Kesmai some competition, working to create an online sim that addressed some of AIR WARRIOR's limitations. The company, Interactive Creations, Inc. (ICI) created some killer flight models and multiplayer code and initially teamed with Domark, who provided an updated version of the Flight Simulator Toolkit graphics engine. The resulting product, CONFIRMED KILL, went online in a beta form in mid-1995. While in beta, anyone with access to the Internet could play the game for free, taking up a World War II fighter against opponents from all over the world. As you'd guess, it got very popular—and very crowded—in no time at all.

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

Late last year, ICI terminated its agreement with Domark and teamed instead with Graphic Simulations, one of the premiere flight sim producers for the Macintosh. The simulation was renamed WARBIRDS (Domark still plans to bring out its own multiplayer sim using the CONFIRMED KILL moniker), and revamped to use a PC version of Graphic Simulations' high-res graphics engine. The early betas had a complex enough flight model to impress even jaded sim fans, but the dated FST graphics just weren't impressive. The new graphics engine moves the imagery from the serviceable to the impressive: 486 users can fly in smooth 640x480 resolution, while Pentium owners can experience a silky 1024x768 view.

A few weeks before this was written, WARBIRDS reached version 1.0, and ICI turned on the billing clock. This doesn't mean that ICI is finished developing the game—many planned features, such as carrier task force groups, still aren't installed. But there's plenty there now to make for a playable game, and new features are being added almost weekly.

In WARBIRDS, the player is a pilot for one of four countries (designated A, B, C, and D, but more commonly referred to by color, such as Green or Purple). In normal day-to-day play, the primary objective is to capture territory. Players for each team stage attacks on enemy airbases; once a base's defenses are destroyed, a pilot lands and claims it for his country.

The organization and size of such raids varies immensely. Sometimes you'll log on to find 10 or 15 planes mixing it up in dogfights, taking off and joining the fray on a one-on-one basis. On other evenings you may find a group of Purples putting

> **"Warbirds' flight modeling is realistic enough to give even seasoned sim pilots a run for their money."**

ON THE RADAR

The online air combat arena is getting crowded. Joining AIR WARRIOR for Windows and WARBIRDS in the fray is ACES: THE BATTLE FOR AIR SUPERIORITY, from Gemsoft and VR-1, Inc. While the former two sims are aimed primarily at the hard-core sim fan, ACES will be targeted at the casual, beginner pilot. Gemsoft describes it as "a sit-and-shoot experience with a very short learning curve." Although it's based on the abysmal FIGHTER WING simulation engine, an early version on display at Winter CES did a passable job of simulating aerial combat between P-40 Warhawks. Watch http://www.vr1.com for news on this sim.

Meanwhile, ICI isn't sitting still with its release of WARBIRDS 1.0. Next on tap is a Windows 95 version that will support SLIP/PPP logons, which should make getting online with the sim much easier for folks who aren't Internet wizards. Following that will be a multiplayer, online space combat simulation which will feature inertia and other unique features.

together a massive raid, with a dozen fighters escorting a group of bombers. You can join a squadron, or attack as a solo pilot. This is part of the fun of WARBIRDS—players can make it whatever kind of game they choose.



DAWN PATROL A B-17 taxis out for an early-morning attack; night time in WARBIRDS lasts only a few minutes.

A wonderful example of this happened just before Warbirds went final. A group of players decided that instead of trying to shoot each other down, they'd stage an air race. Rules were drawn up, an appropriate patch of terrain was chosen, and the races were on. But perhaps most impressive is that ICI responded to this unpredicted use for its sim by adding a new airstrip to its scenery called Reno, which features a rectangular racing course and marker pylons.

THE PROP DEPARTMENT

As of mid-January, WARBIRDS sported the following WW II-era aircraft: F4U-1 Corsair, A6M1 Zero, B-17C Flying Fortress, P-38J Lightning, P-39D Aircobra, P-51D Mustang, FW-190-4, Bf-109G, and Spitfire Mk. IX. Also in the works are the F6F Hellcat, I-A-5, Me-110C, Hurricane, IL-2, B-25 Mitchell, and SBD Dauntless, with more to follow.

WARBIRDS' flight modeling is realistic enough to give even seasoned sim pilots a run for their money. Torque pulls your plane to the side when you gun the engine; pulling too fast into a turn causes an accelerated stall; and deadly spins are easy to enter in planes like the Corsair. You'll really want a full set of flight controls (stick, throttle, and rudder pedals) to fly this sim; fumbling for the rudder and throttle keys as you attempt to recover from a spin—while a Zero bears down on you—is too much for most to handle. Most of the flight models are still being tweaked, and some planes fly more realistically than others. The P-38 is the mount of choice for beginners, since it's difficult to spin and the twin engines nullify any torque effects. (There's also a beginner's arena with a simplified flight model, but it remains largely unused.)



SPIT TAKE The Supermarine Spitfire Mk. IX is one of eight fighters currently available in WARBIRDS.

The B-17 is currently a single-pilot aircraft (computer-controlled gunners defend the ship when you hold down the fire button); ICI eventually plans to allow multiple crew members to man the various positions. For now, you fly to the target from the pilot's position, then jump into the bombardier's compartment and use a nicely-modeled Norden bombsight to take out the target.

CAMPAIGN YEAR

Along with the always-running arena battle, WARBIRDS will also play host to periodic historical campaigns. The first of these, an allied raid over Keil, Germany, was scheduled to be played out in late January. This campaign was slated to feature 50 P-51D Mustangs escorting 18 B-17 bombers against a force of 40 Me-109 and FW-190 fighters. Next up in April is the Solomons '43 scenario, which will pit a force of American Hellcats, Corsairs, Lightnings, Aircobras, and Dauntlesses against an equal-sized Japanese force of Zeros and Vals.

Each campaign features custom terrain that can be downloaded from ICI's web page. Like WARBIRDS itself, the downloads are free; you're only charged for time spent flying online. The files you'll need to get started aren't that big—about 1300K for the WARBIRDS executable and the latest update, plus another megabyte or so for basic art files. To get the full, art package, though, you'd better plan on tying up your phone line for a while: the 640x480 art package is about 4 MB in size, while the 1024x768 package approaches 9 MB. If you received the CCW Extra CD-ROM with this issue, you're in luck—you'll find Warbirds 1.0 on the disc.

▸ WARBIRDS costs $2/hour to play ($1.75/hour if accessed using the CRIS Internet provider), with a minimum monthly charge of $10. The front-end allows you to fly solo to practice your airmanship, but you won't find any other aircraft in the skies until you log on. For more information on the sim, point your web browser to http://www.icigames.com, emailgunjam@cris.com, or see the WARBIRDS directory on this issue's CD-ROM.

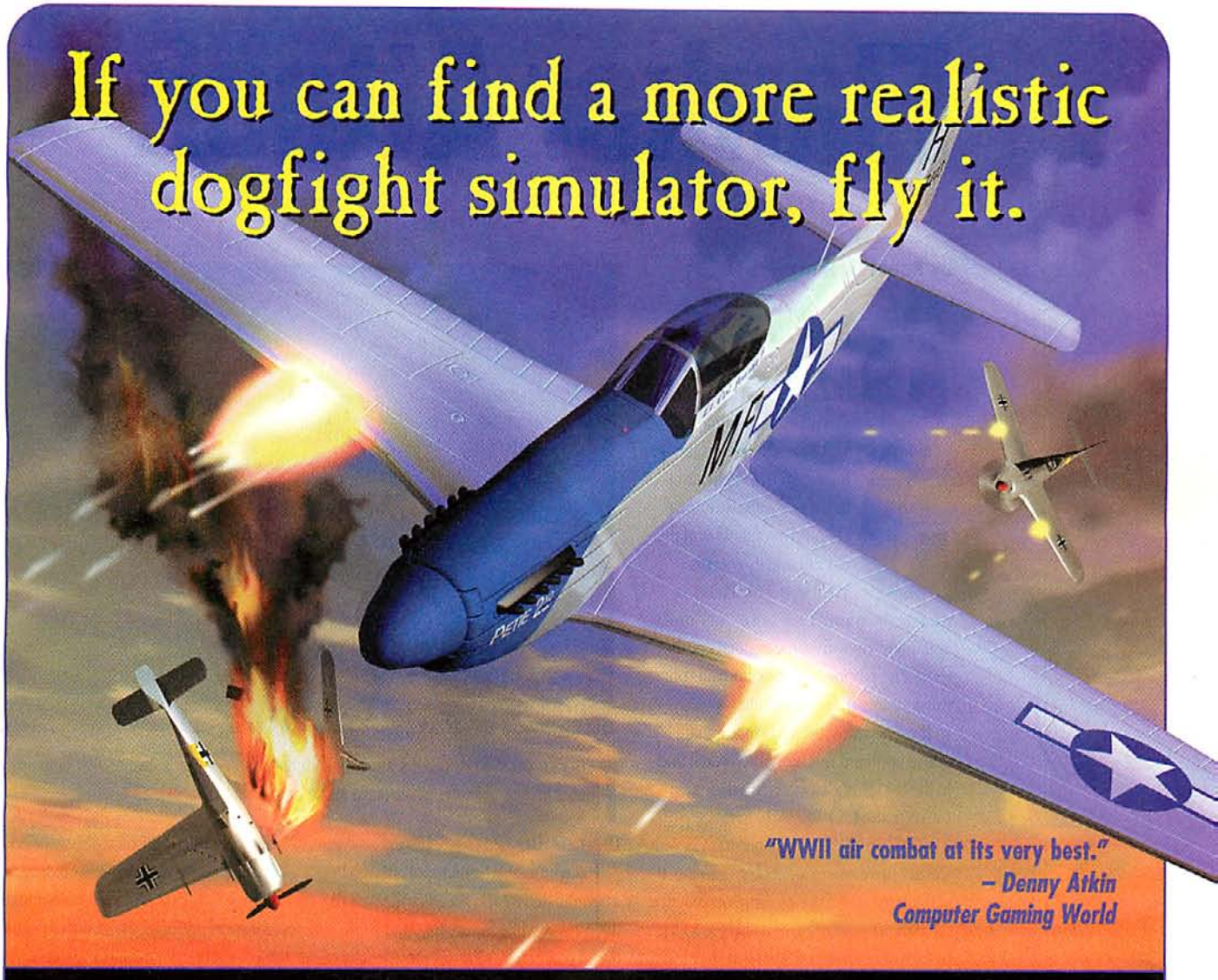
CG TIPS!

Looking for more information to help you get started in WARBIRDS? Check out the following pages on the World Wide Web:

▸Main Warbirds Page	http://www.icigames.com
▸Warbirds FAQ	http://www.cris.com/~french/ckfaq.html
▸BK's Warbirds Rumor Page	http://stout.entertain.com/crawford/gjint.html
▸Hatchlings Beginner's Guide to Warbirds	http://www.access.digex.net/~holland/cksp13.html
▸Warbirds Scenarios	http://world.std.com/~msmiller/CK/DoK.html

If you have tips or cheats you'd like to share with other sim fans, email them to datkin@zd.com.

If you can find a more realistic dogfight simulator, fly it.



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PHILIPS

Flanker Attack

Strap Into The Su-27 And Fly CG's Heart-Pounding Training Mission

by Robin G. Kim



LOCKED ON Sometimes it's easier to shift the missile seeker's field of view onto the target than to point the whole plane in the right direction.

SU-27 FLANKER from SSI packs enough realism to challenge even the veteran sim pilot. So, comrade, we've developed this training program to help familiarize you with the intricacies and peculiarities of the aircraft and its systems. We'll start with a training mission (be warned, it is not a "milk run"), and follow up with some general tips that should help bring you back from all your missions as a hero of the state.

If you're ready, then, komrade, load upthe ironhand.mis file, which you'll find in the \SU27 directory on this issue's CGW Extra CD-ROM, or in the SU27MISS.ZIP file available at CG's web site at http://www.zdnet.com/~gaming. If you want to see if your instructors practice what they preach, you can also see a film of this officer performing the same mission by viewing ironhand.trk, included in the same directory.

IRON HAND

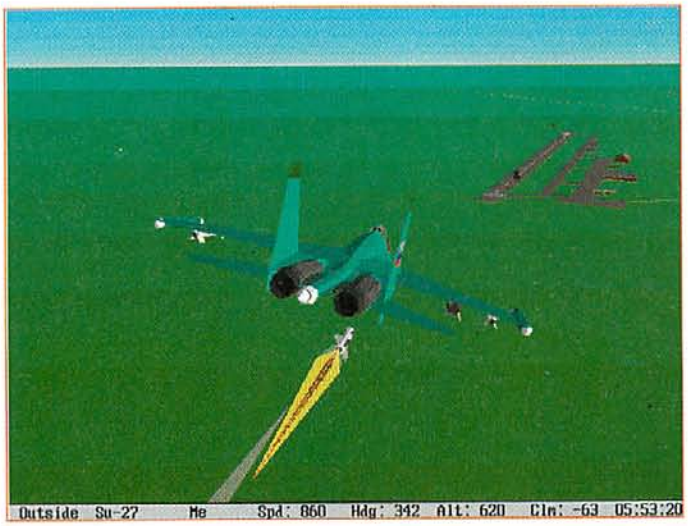
Today's target is Simferopol airbase. In a coordinated attack, Su-24s will take out the runway while Su-25s hit other facilities. A pair of MiG-29s will provide fighter escort. Your job is to lead a section of Su-27s on an "Iron Hand" strike to neutralize the base's air defenses. This quick run-through will help prepare you for the mission you've been assigned.

The flight plan calls for a stealthy ingress, below the enemy's early warning radar. You're lucky the Ukrainians have no AWACS in the area, because they can detect planes almost down to the deck. Our AWACS will be flying, so leave your radar off and rely on the information that is datalinked to your aircraft.

At the initial point, pop up to let nearby SAM radars paint you. Now is a good time to cut your wingman loose to hunt on his own. When your threat warning display (TWD) shows a search radar pinging you, select Kh-31p antiradiation missiles. Point roughly at the radar source, then hold down the Tab key so that you'll lock onto the radar as soon as it begins tracking you. Wait for the shoot cue on the HUD, release Tab, and hold down the trigger until the missile leaves the rail.

Now you'll need to maneuver to defeat the SAM that's surely on its way. Chaff is an effective decoy if you can put the threat at your four- or eight-o'clock position. Active jamming reduces the acquisition range of enemy radars, but is relatively ineffective at spoofing missiles, which is what's needed here.

Now that you've alerted the enemy to your presence, interceptors will scramble from Simferopol and Saki to the northwest—you have no time to lose. Turn back toward the airfield and switch to Kh-29T television-guided missiles. Using the missile seeker's view displayed on the multifunction display (MFD), it's hard to spot vehicle-sized targets unless you know where to look. You could drive right in, slewing the seeker around, hoping you



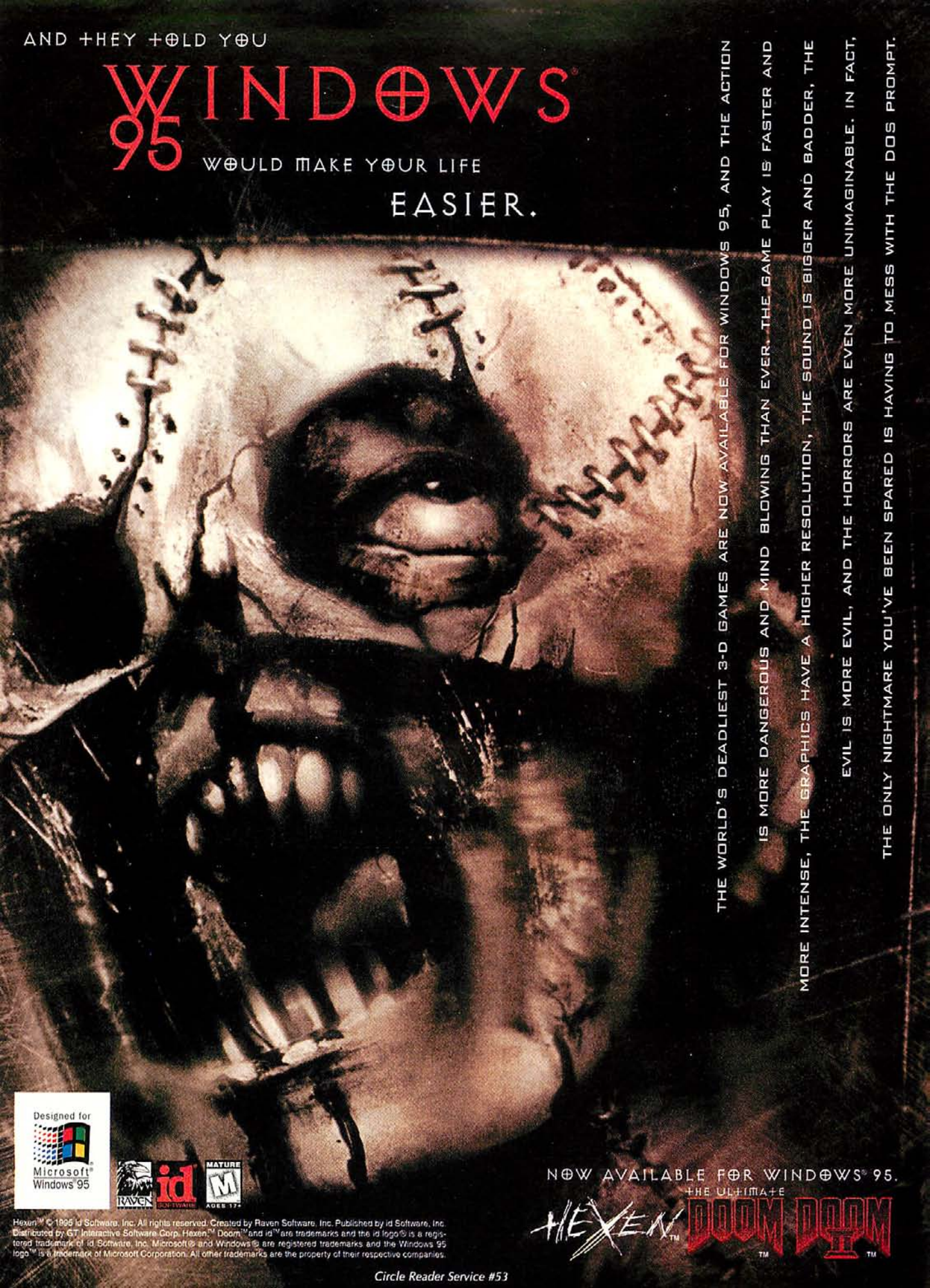
BIG STICK The Kh-29T has a huge warhead (five times heavier than the AGM-65B Maverick's) so using it on ground vehicles is really overkill, but there's no smaller missile you can carry.

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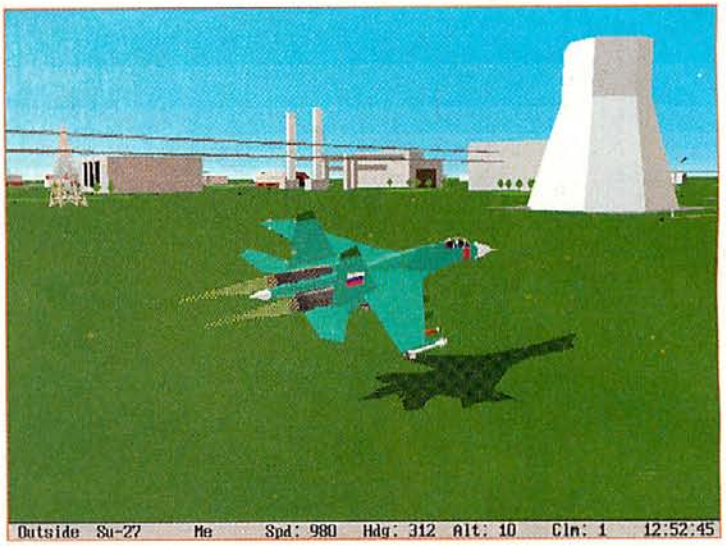
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spot the short range defenses before they blast you, but this may require more passes than you have time for. It's better to do a quick scan of the area with air-to-ground radar first. In scan mode, vehicles appear as twinkling dots. The distance the radar can scan varies with altitude, so make sure you're high enough—detection range is roughly 20 times your height above ground level. The Kh-29T's seeker has the same limitation, which means it will only work when pointed three or more degrees below the horizon.

Memorize the location relative to the airstrip of each potential target, orienting yourself using both the MFD view and the radar scan diamond in the HUD, then turn off the radar to aim your Kh-29T's. Center a target in the MFD, lock, launch, and then move on to the next target. Seconds count, so work fast.

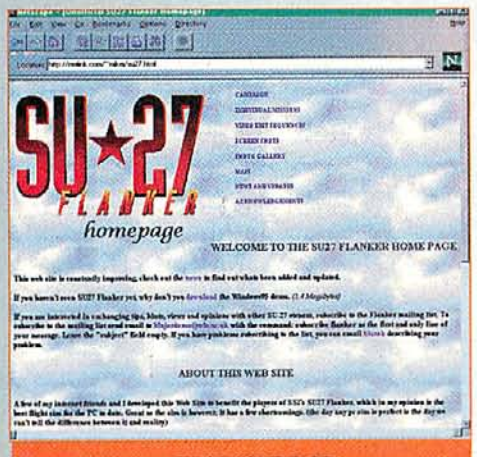
Once you've fired your missiles, dive for the deck and head for home. If you notice any AAA or SAM launchers that survived your attack, either because you didn't see them or your missiles failed to connect, you might risk another pass to help ensure the safety of your comrades. After you've cleared out, go ahead and call your wingman back into formation for the flight home. Remember to check the AWACS information periodically to ensure you're not being pursued.



ON THE DECK Flying below 10 meters will protect you from SAMs, but watch out for power lines.

Target Site

If you're looking for more missions to fly and have World Wide Web access, check out Michael Joseph's outstanding "Unofficial Su-27 Flanker Home Page" at http://nwlink.com/~mikej/su27.html. The site features a growing archive of player-designed missions and films, but its centerpiece will be a branching mission-based campaign scenario that Mike and his team are developing. The lack of a built-in campaign mode is a common gripe among Su-27 FLANKER players, so the completion of this scenario is eagerly anticipated.



SU-27 HOME PAGE

FLANKER IN DETAIL

As you fly other missions, you may notice that the SU-27 FLANKER manual doesn't cover every gory detail, leaving some things for you to puzzle out for yourself. Here we will clarify some of the more confusing aspects of the simulation.

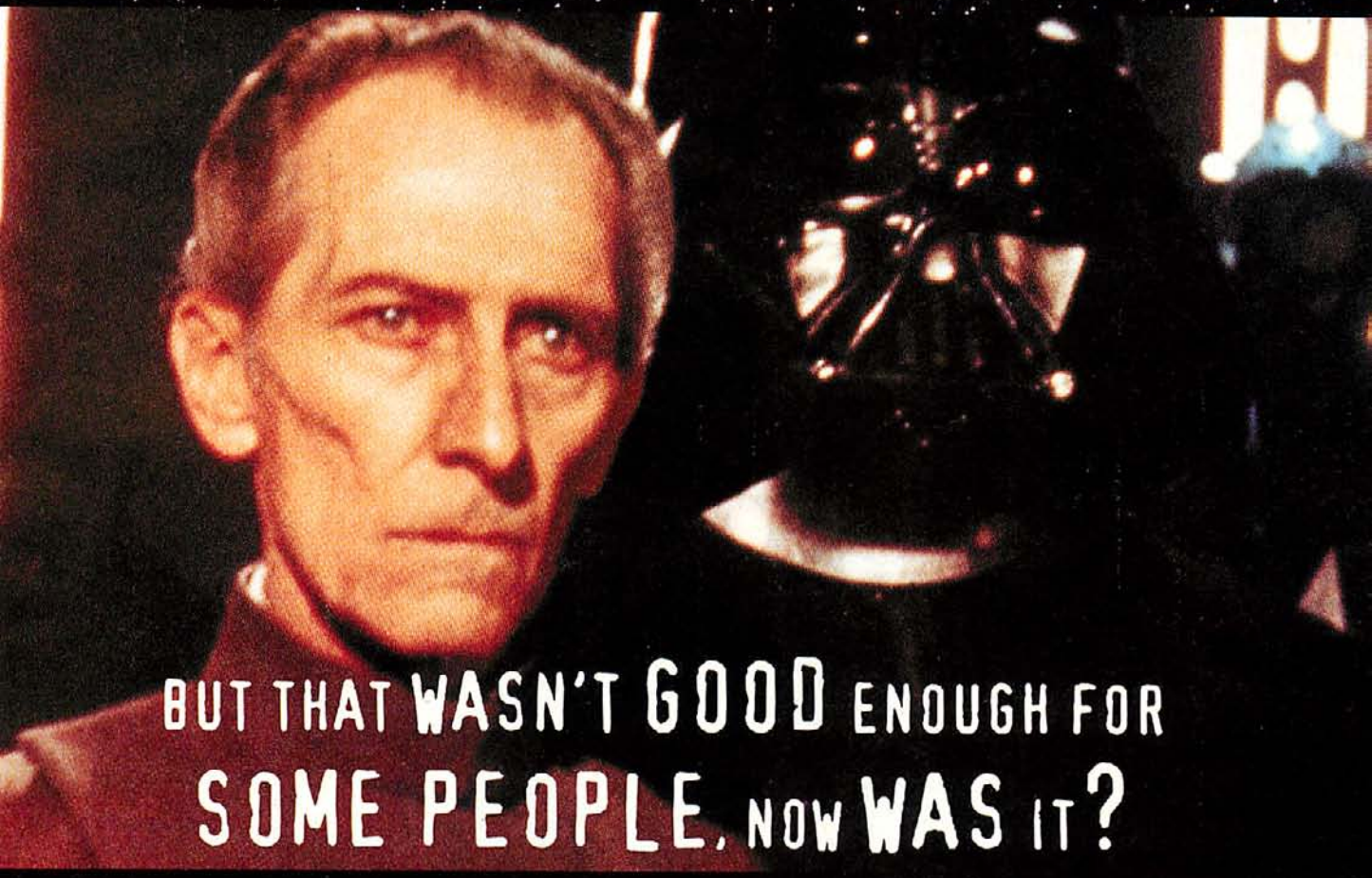
Ballistic weapons, such as unguided rockets and dumb bombs, have undocumented release restrictions that may leave you wondering why you don't get a shoot cue. For rockets, you must pitch down at least three degrees to fire. Bombs can't be targeted at greater than four degrees of upward pitch, and will not release if your true airspeed exceeds 1070 kilometers per hour.

The R-77 missile is nicknamed the AMRAAMski because of it's similarity to the AIM-120 AMRAAM. There is one big difference between them, however. Unlike the AMRAAM, which can operate autonomously from launch to intercept, the R-77 requires radio command guidance to get near the target. That means until it's within the 15 km range of its onboard radar, you must maintain your own radar lock or the missile will self-destruct. It is possible to guide the R-77 through this initial stage using just the EOS, but without accurate range information your missile may fall short. After you judge that the R-77 has switched on its radar, turning off your radar and using the EOS in search mode lets you track your missile to see if it's likely to hit.

Countermeasures deployed by air targets can have weird effects on your sensor displays. If your radar is locked onto a target, and suddenly the numerical target information disappears even though the blip remains, you have been jammed and are probably locked onto a chaff cloud. Break the lock and you'll see the target's blip split in two. The chaff's blip will eventually disappear; before then you can reacquire by guessing which blip is the real aircraft. False contacts also appear when a target you're scanning with the electro-optical system (EOS) dispenses flares, but they won't cause you to lose lock.

The tips and tactics described here should help you become more effective in your missions, and evoke a greater appreciation for the wealth of realism designed into SU-27 FLANKER. Watch your six—the homeland is counting on your for its defense.

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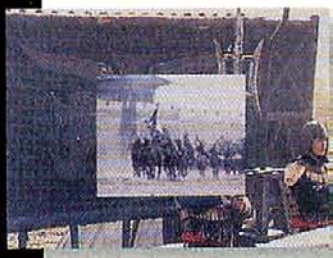
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Farewell To The Troops

CGW's Wargame Columnist Enlists On The Design Side



After a brilliant but failed defense of France, Napoleon's finest veterans, his Old Guard, assembled on a bright April morning in the courtyard at Fontainebleau. Forced to abdicate, Napoleon was allowed to bid his personal farewell to these brave men. "Soldiers of my Old Guard, after 20 years I have come to say good bye. France has fallen," began the old Emperor's brief and tearful address.

I watched that scene from the film *Waterloo* again, while somberly searching for the words to write this column. After 20 years as a game critic, I, too, have come to say "good bye." Although my circumstances are far happier than exile to Elba, I must leave the pages of *Computer Gaming World* as a reviewer of strategy games and a columnist.

THE GOOD NEWS

That's the bad news. The good news is that I'm leaving my *CGW* bunker to join the fight in the trenches. I'm joining the fine team at Interplay Productions where I'll be doing my bit for the war effort to help create strategy games that will build bridges between our veteran war and strategy gaming community (of which I remain a proud, long-standing member) and the larger, elusive mass market.

Even as I rest my gaming pen to take up a hobby sword, I have been chided by many about what I can look forward to from *The Press*—how different it will be to *receive* reviews, rather than write them.

> "I'm leaving my *CGW* bunker to join the fight in the trenches."

BRIEFINGS

▸ The ammo continues to roll out of Arsenal Publishing. Their latest announcement concerns PACIFIC TIDE: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE JAPANESE EMPIRE 1941-45. Also in the works from Arsenal is TACOPS II and a WWII North Africa version of PANZERS EAST (being done with the help of Game Designers Workshop's Frank Chadwick).

▸ It's sad to say, but QQP has closed its doors. Apparently, its parent company, American Laser Technology, made the decision. Although QQP seemed to be turning around its fiscal problems thanks to hits like THE PERFECT GENERAL II, it wasn't enough to keep American Laser from taking aim. QQP founder Bruce Williams and his right-hand man Steve Cohen will probably return to gaming once the dust settles on the closing of QQP.

▸ Deadly Games has finally released OPERATION DRUMBEAT, the sequel to their U-BOAT game, for the Macintosh.

▸ Alan Emrich, Bob Murphy and Richard Barter will be working on three scenario disks for EMPIRE 2 to be published by Novastar: THE WATERLOO CAMPAIGN (10 scenarios), NAPOLEONIC BATTLES (approximately 12 scenarios), and CIVIL WAR BATTLES.

▸ What's in a name? Ask the people at MicroProse's marketing department. The new title for the MASTER OF ANTARES game we previewed in the January issue is now MASTER OF ORION II: THE BATTLE FOR ANTARES. So, it's MOO 2 to you, too. As of the New Year, however, this game still has not gone into a full beta stage.

▸ Interactive Broadcasting, the online game developer best known for FEDERATION II (available on GEnie, AOL and more) is still at work on their massive BARBAROSSA wargame and has started work on a global stock market game. For the first time, gamers will not be limited to either the real ticker or a simulated ticker of one stock market, but will be able to play several markets around the clock, using real ticker feeds.

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ALAN EMRICH

That is true, but Interplay's won't be the first games I've done (I have a few board game credits already) and I believe in honest criticism. Although Napoleon once remarked that "five hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets," I'm willing to step into the arena and face them.

PERCEIVED BIAS

Since I am going to be developing computer games, I can no longer continue this column with CGW nor review other companies' games. This magazine has never allowed active game designers to review products in a genre that competes with their own. I do hope, though, to return to CGW with an occasional strategy/analysis piece or a guest commentary, as game designers/producers have done here in the past. I will also continue to write (books and articles) and work on board and card game projects in my "free" time.

While I will no doubt be online less than I used to be, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the special friends I've made there. Many of you I've met, some I've had over for gaming and victuals, and all of you I appreciate more than you know. Despite the rotten fruit from the Lie-vine, the failed Tryst, and senseless flamers, you'll still find me in cyberspace from time to time, where I hope to continue to expand my circle of friends and share ideas with you.

SO REMEMBER ME

"Though I love you all, I cannot embrace you all," Napoleon concluded his farewell to the Old Guard, and kissed the military banner that they had they rallied to through numerous battles and campaigns. "With this kiss, remember me. Good bye my soldiers. Good bye my sons." CG

CG TIPS!

▶ Here are various cheat codes for WARCRAFT II. Type them as shown and press enter while playing the game. Glittering Prizes-Lot's of gold, lumber and oil!
It is a good day to die-Invincibility.
noglues-Disable magical traps.
valdez-Gain 5000 oil.
showpath-Shows you the map.
Make it so-Builds fast.
hatchet-Allows a peasant to take less whacks at trees.
Cheats submitted by
Nick Navarro
Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

▶ ALLIED GENERAL:
Airpower is the key to a successful campaign as the Americans. Buy strategic bombers and use them as auxiliary units. They are more or less impervious to ground fire, and should be used to carpet bomb enemy units you plan to attack later in that turn. A good attack can suppress up to half of a Tiger's strength, making them manageable targets for Shermans and M10s.

Use a combination of air defense and fighters as the Russians to defeat the Luftwaffe. Well positioned AD units can erode those Me109s and FW190s to the point where your interceptors can do some damage. If the weather is bad, try to trap German aircraft over areas where air defense units are available—or trap them and then move the AD units under them in the hopes that the weather will clear next turn.

▶ HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC
The cost of defending three or four castles can be prohibitive in the middle stages of the game. To circumvent this problem, leave very weak armies in your castles, but keep substantial cash reserve and plenty of recruits. When the enemy attacks, buy an adequate defensive force at the point of attack. If the invaders bypass the now defended castle, ride out and meet them in the field. ALLIED GENERAL and HEROES tips from CGW writer Tim Carter.

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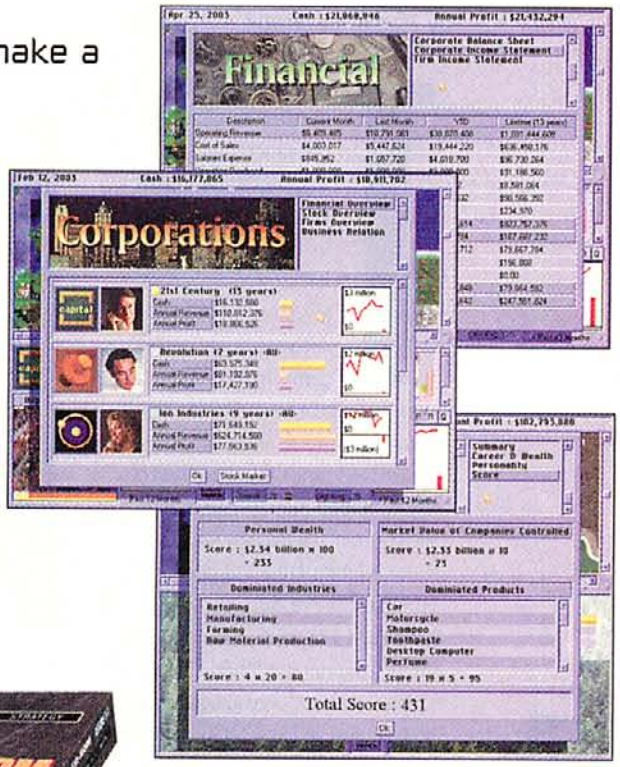
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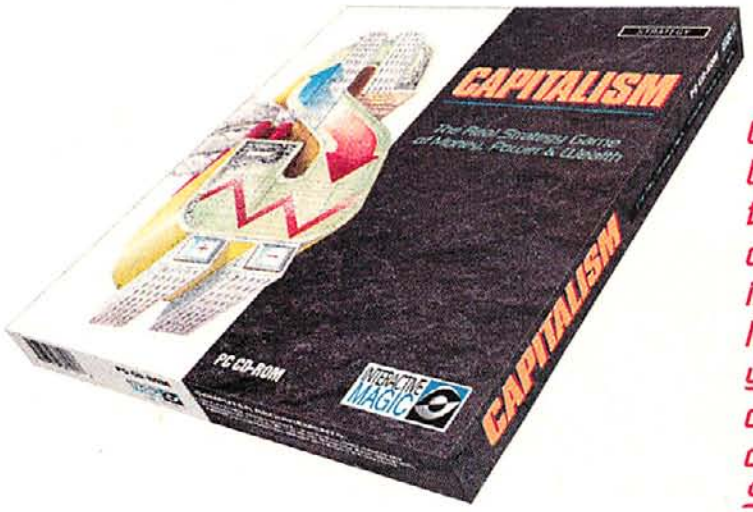
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CG CHOICE

More Orcs And Humans

Join The Fray Over Air, Land and Sea

by Martin E. Cirulis

This winter has been lousy for weather, but pretty good for computer game sequels. The latest game to test the trend is Blizzard's follow-up to their smash head-to-head fantasy wargame, WARCRAFT. The original was such a tight, enjoyable little game that you might think WARCRAFT 2: TIDES OF DARKNESS, with such a tough act to follow, would have no choice but to enter the dreary land of "More of the Same" that we've already seen with such sequels as X-COM: TERROR FROM THE DEEP or DOOM 2. Fortunately for us, the kids at Blizzard have spent some time rummaging through the closet of "Bigger, Better and Prettier" and produced a sequel that is both familiar and novel at the same time.



AHOY, YE SCURVY HUMANS WARCRAFT 2 has brought the fight for Azeroth to the skies and sea, with aerial and naval units.



Price: $54.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486/33 or better, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, hard drive, 2x CD-ROM drive; supports most major sound cards
of Players: 1-8
Protection: None
Designer: Ron Millar
Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
Irvine, CA
(800) 953-SNOW
***Reader Service* #:** 343

ORC AND BEINGS

For those of you who played the humans in WARCRAFT and successfuly saved the noble land of Azeroth, I have some bad news...you didn't. It seems the Orcish hordes were just resting a bit, and the moment you turned off your computer, they rushed from their dimensional portal to victory. The once-proud humans of Azeroth have been forced to flee across the sea to a new land, Lordaeron, in hopes of findings allies and a home.

Lordaeron provides the classic assortment of upstanding, right-thinking classic fantasy races: Elves, Dwarves and Gnomes are the other inhabitants of this new land. They are as unamused by the invading Orcs as you are, and can generally be counted on to lend you a hand in your upcoming fight for freedom. Of course, the Orcs are not without new resources as they continue to spill across the world. While acquiring naval technology, the Orcs have made the acquaintances of the usual goons of fantasy, namely the Goblins and Trolls.



"I GOT AXE FOR YOU" The humorous little Orcs are back, and this time they've brought bloodthirsty Trolls, Ogres and sneaky Goblins with them.

What this new body politic means to players, be they Human or Orc, is that not only are you showered with a host of new units, but the campaigns themselves are much more interesting, with scenarios now ranging from all-out bloodfests to diplomatic rescue missions.

BROADSIDES AND ORC-SHOT

WARCRAFT 2 is a DOS-based game that works well in a Windows 95 environment, and is essentially the same engine as the original, but tuned up a notch in

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terms of graphic appeal, user-friendliness, and network capability.

The interface is simple point-and-click mouse work, but since the game runs in real-time mode only, prospective generals should either have quick mouse skills or be prepared to turn the game's speed way down, as large battles require a fair amount of micro-management. Of course, the transition to crisp SVGA has made unit identification not only easier, but a real pleasure. Blizzard has done an excellent job of creating beautiful animations for each unit, which are intricate and entertaining, but don't slow the game down even on a 486/66.

There are two long campaigns, one track for the Humans and one for the Orcs. Campaigns consist of a series of linked scenarios, which involve either building up a base of operations and destroying your opponent's base, or achieving a "quest," in which you are given a set number of units and must perform some sort of task before you are destroyed. Base battles involve balancing the cost of military units versus building up your village infrastructure. In keeping with the original WARCRAFT, the humble but useful peasant laborers are still the key to any long-term battle-strategy. There is now an additional resource, Oil, which must be retrieved to build up your navy.



THE FIGHT JUST GOT BETTER Warcraft 2 has beautiful SVGA graphics, more features, more units, great multiplayer capabilities, and retains the fun qualities of the original.

Your new allies have brought new units, and with them come whole new tactical venues. Apart from cool things like demolition teams, Elven Rangers, Troll Berserkers, and a pumped-up magic system, the big news in WARCRAFT 2 has got to be the expansion of the war over the water and into the skies. Since the playfield is large enough now to have viable seas and large islands, players will often find themselves having to build actual navies in order to protect themselves and then press the attack. You can now construct Destroyers, Battleships and even submersibles like Gnomish Subs and Goblin War-Turtles. The Air War is not as complex, but players can scout the land with recon aircraft and lay waste to it with Gryphons and Dragons.

The tweaks, improvements and details that have been added to WARCRAFT 2 are too numerous to cover in detail, but you can safely assume that almost everything has been changed for the better. Even the unit behaviors are a little more realistic; units are far more capable of taking care of themselves while you are busy elsewhere, and ambushes are not quite as easy to set. This is still a simple, straightforward wargame, but it has been skillfully taken to the next level of detail and complexity, without losing any of the playability.

THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

Another great surprise in this game is the scenario design kit. While it is primarily for the creation of maps for both single and net play, you can do far more than just fiddle with the landscape. All unit and building values can be changed, allowing you to create your own customized fantasy battles, based on your own preconceptions. Think that the Orc player should be playing more like a horde? Take away his more advanced units and make his grunts cheap and fast to make.

As with most competent sequels, if you liked the original game then you should definitely pick up this one. WARCRAFT 2 successfully breaks new ground without losing sight of what made it a great game in the first place. While I think that these kinds of games really need to introduce branching campaigns to reduce the "puzzle" aspect of some of the scenarios, Blizzard should be commended for pushing the design further instead of just pumping out more of the same. If you enjoy fantasy gaming, or simply like the kind of base-building tactical wargames that have become popular in the last couple of years, then this is a sure bet for you—and if you have access to a network for gaming, then WARCRAFT 2 moves into the "Must Buy" category.

APPEAL: Anyone looking for laughs, intense action, pocketfuls of features and creatures, and simple, yet engrossing gameplay will want to play this Warcraft sequel.

PROS: A worthy successor to the original, which pushes the design in new directions, plus a powerful scenario tool-kit and a great multiplayer option.

CONS: The campaigns are a little weak and the problem of failure = repetition still exists.

CG RATED

Net-Orcing in WARCRAFT 2

For me, the best part of WARCRAFT 2 is its multiplayer capability. With slots for up to eight players and very aggressive computer opponents, you can choose anything from simple head-to-head modem struggles to big IPX-network confrontations filled with alliances and betrayals. The multiplayer suite is extremely easy to use, and the only tricky part is making sure each player clicks on the confirmation box beside their name before starting the game.

The game comes with numerous built-in scenarios designed for two, four, six or eight players, and many of them have maps that highlight land, sea or air combat. Once you set which players are going to be humans and which will be played by the computer, you can go on your way with the standard settings, or change options such as limited sighting range or even the use of cheat codes. Players joining the game get to see which options are being set, but can only change their alliances or race before the game starts.

Creative gamers should really try designing their own battle maps for network play. Tinkering with the attributes of various units can allow for a huge number of possible scenarios. The process of creating and playing scenarios with your friends will give WARCRAFT 2 a long life on your hard drive, and it's a great learning process for you budding game designers out there.

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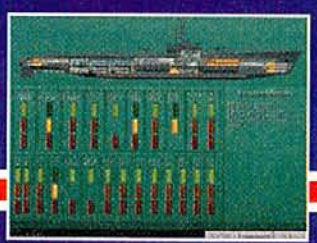
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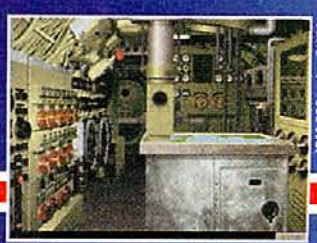
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Riding With Patton

Switching Sides Can Be A Tankful Of Fun

by Tim Carter

Rarely has the prospect of tanks on the horizon been so warmly welcomed as with the release of ALLIED GENERAL. And while it is fair to say that ALLIED GENERAL does not live up to the expectations of many, this is due as much to the level of expectation as to the quality of the game.

While ALLIED GENERAL is a fine game, and will provide many hours of enjoyment for die-hard aficionados and beginners alike, it just doesn't quite have the elegance, play-balance and tension of PANZER GENERAL. Matched against virtually any other strategy or wargame on the market today, ALLIED GENERAL holds up as solid entertainment. Unfortunately, matched against its predecessor, it lacks some of the intangibles that made PANZER GENERAL such a superlative product.



AXIS TO ALLIES ALLIED GENERAL is a good, solid wargame; though it might not be equal to its predecessor, it definitely holds its own as a good game.

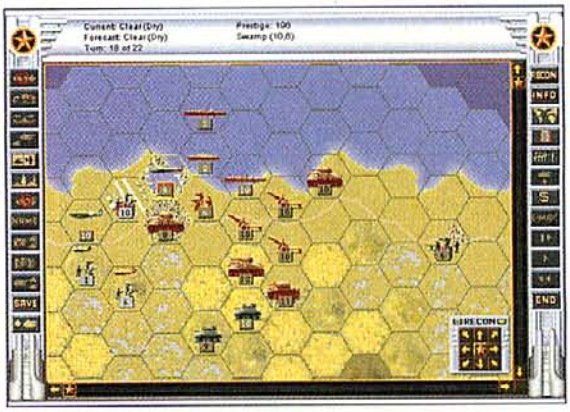


Price: $55.96
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486/66 or better, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 6 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, Windows 95 or Win 3.1, mouse; supports most major sound cards
of Players: 1-2
Protection: None (CD must be in drive to play)
Designer: Halestorm/SSI Special Projects Group
Publisher: Strategic Simulations Inc. Sunnyvale, CA (800) 601-7529
Reader Service #: 344

PLAYING PATTON

This time, players command one of the Allied armies, stemming the German onslaught and moving on to the offensive. The number of core units available to players is considerably smaller than in PANZER GENERAL, and tends to grow at a slower pace. While there are good historical reasons for this (most Western operations involve both British and American forces, so that the player has at best access to only half the available units), it does tend to detract from the overall role-playing aspect of the game.

The real elegance of PANZER GENERAL lay in the play balance built into the scenarios. The combination of tough, aggressive defenders and tight time limits kept most battles tense even the fourth or fifth time around. The scenarios in ALLIED GENERAL, while sometimes quite challenging, are not nearly as well thought out. This is unfortunate because most of them have considerable potential, yet suffer from glaring snags in their execution, leading me to wonder if they were adequately playtested.



WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY? Unfortunately, the Windows 95 interface isn't nearly as intuitive as expected, taking time to learn and adjust to.

The AI has been upgraded somewhat, although most improvements could be categorized as: "Really dumb things the computer doesn't do anymore." It will sometimes escort bombers, presumably when it perceives a threat from enemy interceptors, and will often withdraw weak units from dangerous positions rather than let them be destroyed. It will also disband useless or doomed units and rebuild others in more useful areas.

Perhaps the biggest problem with the scenarios is the lack of clearly defined victory conditions. The briefings rarely provide time limits for a major victory, and often do not indicate if all the objectives need to be taken (or held), or where the split between a major and a minor victory falls. Players may have to spend a few games trying out different strategies just to determine the victory conditions.

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Fred Ford and Paul Reiche III, *Designers – Star Control and Star Controll II*







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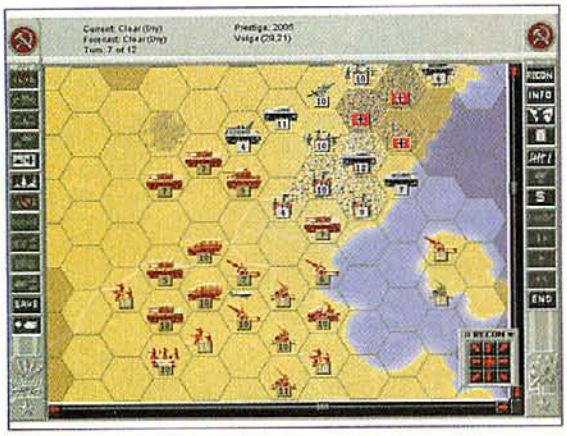
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Circle Reader Service #41



RACING TO BERLIN Each Allied power has a unique fighting style, as ground-heavy Russians will race to Berlin with different tactics than Americans riding in with superior airpower.

This is completely unnecessary, and is a real detriment to the enjoyability of the game. Even in scenarios where the play balance is not that delicate, players have no way of knowing—short of trial and error—how many turns they have to build their core forces into overstrength elite units without losing a major victory.

THIS TANK DRIVES FUNNY

After the scenarios, the most significant changes in ALLIED GENERAL are all related to the game interface. ALLIED GENERAL was designed to run under Microsoft Windows, and may be installed into either Windows 3.1 or Windows 95. I tested the game on a 486/66 with 8 megs of RAM under both 3.1 and 95. While it was a tad sluggish under Windows 3.1, ALLIED GENERAL is definitely functional in the old OS, although the combat animations are too slow to be left on.

Under Windows 95, speed improved noticeably, although scrolling and many auxiliary screens (such as the unit purchase screen) are considerably slower than in PANZER GENERAL. Speaking of scrolling, most elements of the interface are more clumsy than in PANZER GENERAL. Players cannot move about the map simply by pushing their mouse. Now, a recon window with the standard eight-arrow compass allows you to click and push the screen across the map. After about an hour on the new system it becomes both easy and intuitive, but it is still more work than in the earlier game.

It feels as if the designers struggled very hard to make the Windows interface as smooth and easy as PANZER GENERAL's DOS interface, and just didn't quite pull it off. Further, ALLIED GENERAL does not take advantage of some of the existing features of the Windows environment (I would love to have the ability to adjust the size of the strategic map).

On the bright side, the e-mail system has been upgraded substantially. The biggest problem with playing PANZER GENERAL via modem was the inability of players to see their opponents move. Essentially, you were presented with a *fait accompli* that showed only the other side's final positions. ALLIED GENERAL solves this problem by including a video replay of the opposing side's move with the save game file. Players can now review the enemy's movement before planning their strategy.

Happily, ALLIED GENERAL is practically bug free. After over 100 hours with this game, the only technical glitch I found, which neither crashed the program nor affected gameplay, was a rare tendency for the computer to display fortresses as APCs late in the game. The sound and video worked fine from my double-spin CD and Soundblaster Pro.

By the way, the video segments have changed somewhat, now taking the form of wartime films complete with narration.

The manual, while competent, doesn't really provide much support or background. The charts of available equipment that were so useful for planning core upgrades in PANZER GENERAL are conspicuously absent.

WOULD PATTON BE PROUD?

Searching for a metaphor to end my review, I kept coming back to the Sherman tank. Maligned by many, the Sherman was a well-built, reliable machine that provided very good value for the money. The fact that it tended to fare poorly when compared with, say, a Panther D, should not overly cloud our judgment. Who won, after all?

ALLIED GENERAL is not a match for PANZER GENERAL. But in a market virtually overrun with buggy, unfinished wargames that are—pardon me—complete crap, it will be a more than welcome addition to any wargamer's collection, and should remain on their hard drive for quite some time.

Three Games In One

Clearly, the designers have tried to provide players with more than just a politically correct PANZER GENERAL. Each nationality has different strengths and weaknesses, and requires a different strategic approach in order to consistently win major victories. None of the Allied armies fight like the Germans in PANZER GENERAL, and none face the same sort of challenges. Regardless of whether you like the new campaigns or not, SSI cannot be accused of just ripping off the PANZER GENERAL system by cranking out scenarios with the flags switched.

Aspiring Zukhovs can forget about having an air force. Russian planes never lasted more than a few turns under my command, regardless of how carefully I tried to shepherd them. True to history, the Russians must rely on massed artillery and copious amounts of anti-aircraft units.

For the Americans, airpower dominates the battlefield. Strategic bombers work wonders against all types of defender, while effective tactical bombing can keep the German armor under wraps. This is crucial, as American tanks are at a greater relative disadvantage against their enemies than the Germans were against theirs in PANZER GENERAL.

The British combine elements of both American and Soviet forces and strategy. Personally, I think it would have been nice (and realistic) if they had been given just a bit more beginning experience.

And while we're on the subject, what do the folks at SSI have against the Canadian army, anyway? The Free French and Free Poles are included in the force pool, but those fearsome Canadian infantry are nowhere to be found. I think I'll send Carl Norman a red and white toque and a copy of John Keegan's Five Armies at Normandy next Christmas.

APPEAL: **PANZER GENERAL buffs may find ALLIED GENERAL less fun, but those looking for a generally good wargame won't be disappointed.**

PROS: **This is a solid wargame with play improved by e-mail capability and better AI.**

CONS: **Not as good as PANZER GENERAL, with some poor scenarios and an interface that takes some getting used to.**

CG RATED

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ACES

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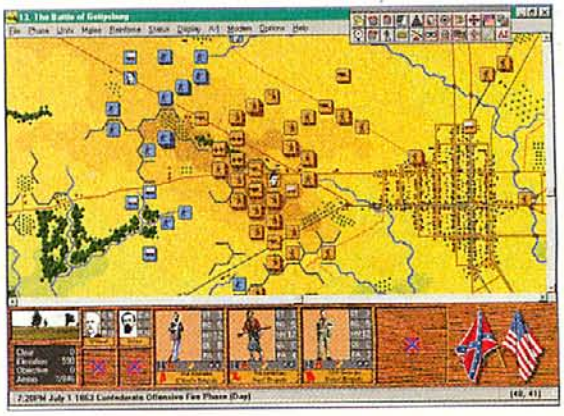
Circle Reader Service #228

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

A New High-Water Mark?

Charge To Glory In The Battlefields Of Gettysburg

by Patrick C. Miller



WELCOME HOME GETTYSBURG finally returns quality Civil War gaming to the table, with great graphics, multimedia, details and scenarios.



Price: $50.00
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386/33 or better (486 recommended), 4 MB RAM (8 MB recommended), SVGA graphics, 5 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM, mouse, Windows 3.1 or Windows 95; supports most major sound cards
of Players: 1-2 (modem play)
Protection: None (CD must be in drive to play)
Designers: Jim Rose, John Tiller
Publisher: TalonSoft
Forest Hill, MD
(410) 821-7282
Reader Service #: 345

Fans of computer wargames based on the American Civil War have suffered through a gaming drought for the past several years. The few releases that offered potential relief have turned out to be light sprinkles, rather than the much-anticipated gully washers. But with the release of BATTLEGROUND: GETTYSBURG, Civil War buffs at last have a game satisfying enough to wet their whistles.

GETTYSBURG represents a significant advancement in the evolution of TalonSoft's Battleground series, which clearly comes into its own in 19th century warfare. The hex maps are more colorful, richly detailed and flexible than BATTLEGROUND: ARDENNES, the company's debut game. Moreover, gameplay is enhanced by including more of the detail that was conspicuously absent in ARDENNES: leaders play an important role in maintaining unit morale and cohesion; flank attacks and enfilade fire make unit facings important; keeping infantry and artillery supplied with ammunition is a critical aspect of battlefield command; a single routed unit can trigger a ripple effect of confusion and panic that spreads widely throughout an army.

NOTHING CIVIL ABOUT IT

A grand tactical, turn-based wargame, GETTYSBURG covers the "high-water mark" of the Confederacy from July 1 to July 3, 1863, when the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, under General Robert E. Lee, and the Union Army of the Potomac, under Major General George C. Meade, converged at the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

There are 12 scenarios covering various key engagements during the three-day battle, ranging from the first contact between Buford's Union cavalry and Heth's division, to Pickett's futile charge into the Union center on the last day. Six of the scenarios offer either historical artificial intelligence (AI), in which the computer player's maneuvers are governed by actual events, or alternate AI that allows the computer opponent more latitude. You can also play the campaign game, covering all three days of the battle in a monster 149-turn scenario that features day and night turns. Throughout the game, video clips of Civil War re-enactments, combined with the sounds of men engaged in fierce combat, help immerse you in the period and the game.

ARRAYED FOR BATTLE

The basic maneuver units of GETTYSBURG are infantry and cavalry regiments and artillery batteries. Units are rated for strength, weapon range, movement, quality and fatigue. Officers are rated for their command and leadership abilities. Turns are divided into four phases for each side: movement, defensive fire, offensive fire and melee. During combat, units lose strength points as they take casualties, gain fatigue points through melee or prolonged exposure to enemy fire and can become disrupted or routed under the stress of combat.

Players familiar with ARDENNES will have no trouble diving right into GETTYSBURG. However, as with TalonSoft's first game, the moving and firing of units isn't as intuitive as it could be and requires both some consultation with the manual and a little practice. A handy toolbox with push-button icons enables you to customize the screen display, zoom the map in and out and give orders to your units. Unfortunately, you must reset your screen display preferences each time you start a new game or load a saved game.

The 3-D map view gives GETTYSBURG the look and feel of a miniatures game while the 2-D map provides a board game perspective. There's also a "jump map" that displays the entire battlefield and enables you to move to any location on the map by clicking on a spot. Most players will opt for the zoomed-in 3-D view



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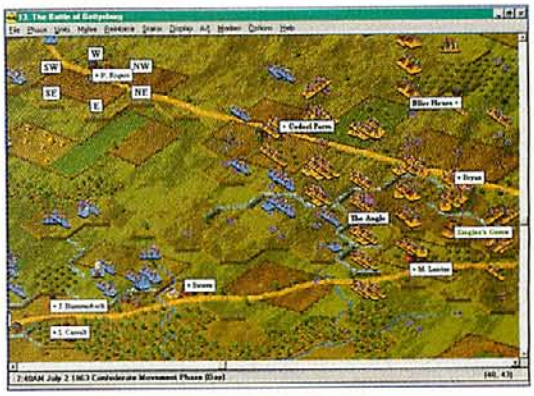
Circle Reader Service #63

because it provides the most dramatic and realistic depiction of the battlefield. Important landmarks, such as Devil's Den, Little Round Top and Cemetery Hill, are easily recognizable. If you want more information, holding down the Shift key toggles a compass rose and displays the names of the landmarks as well as the names of local landowners.

MINIE BALLS AND CANISTERS

The game does a reasonably good job of emulating Civil War tactics and the strategies used by both sides at Gettysburg. Rifle fire is most effective from medium to short range, and sometimes even then doesn't seem terribly lethal. Melee combat is possible, but because it fatigues and disrupts your troops, it should be employed only when you're certain of winning the engagement. Artillery isn't as useful for softening up the enemy defensive positions as it is for repulsing a determined offensive. Troops holding the high ground, dug in behind breastworks, or in good defensive terrain cause real problems for an attacker.

The game's greatest weakness is its AI. Veteran wargamers, especially those familiar with the armies and events at Gettysburg, will have little trouble besting the computer player when using the manual control option. The AI will often lead with unsupported artillery batteries, attack piecemeal and leave important leaders sitting in the open to be easily captured. The "semi-automatic AI" offers greater challenge: you can either take general command of an army and let the computer handle implementation or command an individual brigade or division while the computer handles the rest of the army. With the computer AI "helping" your side, battles are more challenging and more realistic.



THE BLIMP CAM The impressive 3-D view captures a miniatures feel, and makes the action more compelling and exciting.

THE DEVIL TO PAY

Even with GETTYSBURG's increased emphasis on realism, some overly simplistic features remain from ARDENNES. For example, you know just as much about every enemy unit spotted as you do about your own units. In addition, all units are treated as either spotted or unspotted. If you can see an enemy unit, it can see you. In a two-player modem game, this makes it very difficult to ambush your opponent. Unlike ARDENNES, GETTYSBURG does not include a scenario editor, nor does it include a play-by-E-mail option.

Although GETTYSBURG is nearly bug free, it's not without its glitches. The manual fails to mention that when a unit moves and fires, it does so at half its normal effectiveness. Starting a modem game as described in the manual doesn't work. (The host player must choose the scenario by selecting "File" from the pull-down menu, selecting "Open," and then loading the correct file for the scenario.) Some of the information in the manual differs from the online help. In addition, double-clicking on the README icon produces a jumbled text file instead of the list of which map modules go with the various scenarios. This is very important when reloading a saved game or starting a modem game (see chart).

Overall, GETTYSBURG is an outstanding game that does justice to the American Civil War period. With TalonSoft scheduling a Waterloo game for release in April and another Civil War game based on Shiloh in May, it seems that gamers whose interests lie in 19th century warfare can see an end to their gaming drought and a good chance of some soaking downpours in the spring.

Scenarios, Files and Maps

When you load a saved game or start a modem game in BATTLEGROUND: GETTYSBURG, it's important to know which map module corresponds to which file or scenario.

Scenario Title		File Name	Map Module
01.	First Contact	mr.scn	McPherson's Ridge
02a.	Out of the Mist	july1ama.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg
02h.	Out of the Mist	july1amh.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg
03a.	A Rock and a Hard Place	july1pma.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg
03h.	A Rock and a Hard Place	july1pmh.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg
04a.	Decisions, Decisions!	july2ama.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg
04h.	Decisions, Decisions!	july2amh.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg
05a.	Double Envelopment	july2pma.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg
05h.	Double Envelopment	july2pmh.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg
06.	The Wheatfield to Round Top	lrt.scn	Little Round Top
07.	Too Little, Too Late	ch2nd.scn	Culp's Hill
08a.	Fight or Retreat?	july3ama.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg
08h.	Fight or Retreat?	july3amh.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg
09.	Culp's Hill, Bloody Hill	ch3rd.scn	Culp's Hill
10a.	The Final Assault	july3pma.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg
10h.	The Final Assault	july3pmh.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg
11.	The High-Water Mark	pc1.scn	Pickett's Charge
12.	Pickett's Charge	pc2.scn	Pickett's Charge
13.	The Battle of Gettysburg	july 1_3.scn	The Battle of Gettysburg

Note: h=Historical AI; a=Alternative AI

APPEAL: BATTLEGROUND: GETTYSBURG **is a must for American Civil War enthusiasts and wargamers.**

PROS: This game offers beautiful graphics and 3-D maps, effective use of multimedia, modem play option, individual scenarios covering key engagements and a campaign game.

CONS: Weak AI, sometimes confusing documentation, no scenario editor or play-by-E-mail capability and simplistic sighting rules weaken an otherwise strong effort.

CG RATED ★★★★



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Storybook Wargames

The World Of WARHAMMER Lands A Solid Hit On Desktop Wargaming

by Peter Olafson

I'm not much of a hard-core wargamer, but I have a long-running love affair with games *about* war: little animated guys running around, wielding nasty weapons, shrieking deatheries and falling over in their own blood. POWERMONGER caught my eye, DUNE II was a long and lovely waltz and COMMAND & CONQUER, a whole lost weekend. Now, WARHAMMER: SHADOW OF THE HORNED RAT from Mindscape, has captured all my attention.

It's a slightly Tolkeinesque—and more tactical—turn on those earlier games set in the *Warhammer* universe of the tabletop RPG. You're in charge of a troop of mercenaries based at the town of Wissenheim and begin the game by taking a range of general tasks: the first is defense of a nearby town, the second escorting a merchant caravan.

Of course, there's something larger and darker looming in the background. The Skaven—a race of militant ratmen—have come into possession of a magical Elven crystal called the Warpstone. They mean business, and their business is good business for your little army.

Before each mission, you choose which of your troops will join in the convoy, and then set a marching order (meaningful only in the event of ambush). Afterwards, you look upon a handsome world map, across which a dotted red line winds its way. When it stops, the fighting usually starts.

The battles take place within a richly-textured landscape seen from a bird's-eye point-of-view. You can rotate it, zoom in on it and roam across it using the mouse; and it's worthwhile to do so simply for the aesthetic pleasures of exploration. You may find little villages populated by tiny people, scavenger birds circling for corpses, rain-dappled rivers, working windmills, churches with graveyards, great rocky outcroppings, a fortress parapet and buildings scarred by war.

You'll also use the mouse to set up your troops in the deployment phase. After that's done, the real-time combat begins.



LISTEN UP Bloodthirsty commanders aren't the only wonders of WARHAMMER, a world of fantastic creatures, vermin-like villains, and epic conflicts.

A tour of the battlefield will find troops on the march, others in headlong retreat, arrows singing for blood, heavy mortars booming overhead and unit commanders calling out orders. It is easy to play, and you should be able to master the first few missions in happy ignorance of the instructions (however, you'll do even better if you pore over the fine 120-page manual and brief supplement first). Control is handled largely via a battery of layered icons in the lower right-hand corner. It's fairly straightforward: footprints for moving, crossed-swords for attack, a skull to cancel, a horn to charge and so on.

However, for all that ease of play, WARHAMMER's scenarios become progressively harder to win. Unless you're lucky, you'll eventually find the battlefield decorated with your dead, dying and fleeing, and someone will issue a despairing cry of "All is lost!" So it will be, and you'll have to either restore a saved game to re-fight the battle or check out how well the design team has integrated "failure" into the storyline.

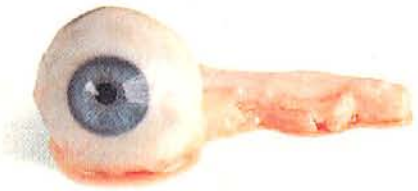


Price: $50
System requirements: IBM compatible 486/66 or better (Pentium recommended), 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive; 21 MB hard drive space, Windows 95, mouse; supports Windows 95-compatible sound cards
of players: 1
Protection: None
Design: Steve Leney, Gavin Moore, Jeff Gammon, Richard Castle and Andy Jones
Publisher: Mindscape
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If you're successful, you'll see a unit-by-unit assessment of damage meted out and experience gained—a nice touch which ought to be included in more wargames—and a balance-sheet on how the outcome improves your cash flow. You'll have a chance to take on replacements for the dead and wounded, hire any new units that have contacted Dietrich (your dry-humored agent), and then it's on to the next mission.

Often, you'll have a choice of directions here. For instance, once you've recovered the kidnapped family of the border prince Sven Carlsson, you can remain in his employ and undertake a campaign against the local orc and goblin population; accompany your new-found dwarven ally on a trek northeast to lift the siege at Zhufbar; or escort the ever-crabby elf lord, Ceridan, on a trip to Loren Forest.

This is a decided step up from previous wargames. The role-playing elements allow WARHAMMER to escape the trap of wargame/RPGs that fall into a simple pattern of battle, story, battle, story. And the emphasis on maintaining an army whose basic status is preserved from scenario to scenario means you have to be much more careful about how you control your armies, lest you lose too many troops to battle and find yourself shorthanded for the next fray. This more realistic approach is both welcome here and missing too often in other wargames.



SADDLE UP The beautiful graphics, richly-detailed landscapes, diverse scenarios, and easy-to-control interface combine to make an inviting wargaming campaign.

A few caveats, however. With all the graphical detail options enabled, scrolling around the battlefield once the battle is joined can be slow, even on a 133 MHz Pentium. Now and then, units that have regrouped after a combat will thereafter be extremely recalcitrant when receiving orders, acting as though they never heard them. There are five saved positions in the game, but it's about five too few to my thinking. Thankfully, there is a "last game" function, alleviating some of the stress of having to remember to save before each battle.

Moreover, while I'm told the Skaven have always been less-than-serious characters in *Warhammer*, as a newcomer to this game system, I found an odd disparity between the terse exchanges of the pre-scenario briefing screens and the broad, sometimes comic-relief quality of the cut-scene story animations. Of course, those who've read the Warhammer novels will feel right at home with this schizophrenic shtick.

Finally, I love the sense of choosing my own direction, but it's a sense that diminishes after the initial blush. The game's paths are more like cul-de-sacs off a central road, and choosing some alternatives sometimes means simply forestalling others. Moreover, in spite of chasing down a few cul-de-sacs, only success really counts in WARHAMMER. This will force all but the most skillful players to reprise the same critical scenarios over and over to obtain a better result.

That's fine in terms of the life of the game, but it's less like writing a story than being forced to follow one, and it might have been nice to develop a range of possible paths delineated by level of success (as we're told the original design was to have had). After all, even the WING COMMANDERS had winning and losing paths. Mindscape does plan to enhance the role-playing element in the sequel, now under construction, so perhaps there's hope for an even better game in the near future.

All things considered, for me, SHADOW OF THE HORNED RAT represents hopes gratified and expectations satisfied. This is the promise of POWERMONGER fulfilled, and I await the next waltz with bated breath.

Some Tips For Taming The Horned Rat

It's possible to win battles but lose the war by taking unacceptably high casualties. If you find you simply can't get through a mission no matter what approach you take, it's likely that some of your units took too much of a drubbing in earlier engagements. Save often, and be prepared to replay scenarios.

Magic is invaluable. You'll pick up an Amber Wizard early in the game. Keep him safe in combat, study his spells and use him prudently. In particular, use The Curse of Anraheir, with which Allor begins the game. It's an exceptionally useful spell for diminishing the combat effectiveness of enemies, and will drive some into a state of panic.



Don't let the Grudgebringer Cavalry do all the work. It's a great unit, and there are few things more invigorating than watching its riders spur their horses to a gallop for a charge. But if you use them as your main instrument, they'll also get the lion's share of experience. Share the wealth, and try to build a balanced force.

If you find an NPC unit already on the battlefield (dwarves, for instance), don't let it stand alone against the enemy. Send assistance immediately. The unit may not be under your direct control, but every ally is valuable in a close fight.

By the same token, don't squander your own forces in a series of one-on-one battles. A combined-arms approach is much more effective. One great tactic is tying down an enemy with a flank assault and then hitting it from the rear with cavalry.

Following these tips will maximize your army's strength and keep Pyrrhic victory at bay.

APPEAL: This game is for folks who like a well-developed, accessible wargame with rich detail.

PROS: Splendid graphics, lively battle sequences, sensible controls and the ability to choose your missions.

CONS: Needs more depth to the role-playing elements and lacks multiplayer mode.

CG RATED

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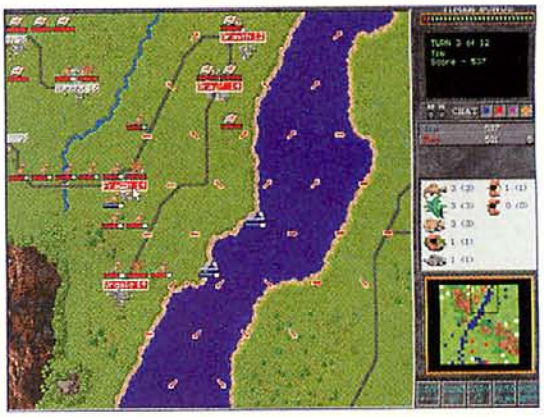
DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Out of Time

Endless Repetition Equals Poor Wargaming

by Tim Carter

Once, there was a nifty little company that specialized in strategy games. The graphics and sound were hardly cutting-edge, but the games were so challenging—and so fun—that true gamers really didn't mind. Sadly, BATTLES IN TIME, though it comes with more bells and whistles than say, THE LOST ADMIRAL or CONQUERED KINGDOMS, is a complete dog. The problem isn't the premise, but the execution: A future Earth, free of war, suddenly comes under alien attack. You have been sent back in time to refight historical battles, re-learning the ancient art of warfare in order to lead the defense of Earth against the alien invaders.



BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS Even as a generic game, Battles In Time fails to excite, especially with its repetitive units and lack of any real strategy.

ARMOR-PIERCING CATAPULTS

Unfortunately, none of the battles offered bear any resemblance to history. Now, I have nothing against generic games. Some, like THE LOST ADMIRAL, are actually more fun without the historical constraints. But BATTLES IN TIME is so vanilla that the differences between units across time frames are non-existent. For instance, the Romans have catapults that fire exploding projectiles halfway across the tactical map. Other than the graphic, these units behave exactly like WWII era artillery. In fact, most units have identical counterparts in other time periods, save for a facelift. In the prehistoric era, Brontosaurs with area-fire artillery and missile-loaded Pterodactyls aren't just inaccurate, they're ludicrous.



TIME TANGLE There's no need to spring for a stealth fighter, when even dinosaurs are outfitted with missiles.

Another problem is the large number of armies available to each side, which makes for extremely repetitive gameplay. The sheer number of units, and the ability to regenerate them each turn, create far too many tactical battles that look and feel similar regardless of terrain or the units involved. At the strategic level, an army of twelve infantry moves as fast as an army of twelve tanks! (Maybe if they were riding Brontosaurs, they'd go faster...)

I can't remember the last time I saw a more dysfunctional game. Only if it were played for laughs would BATTLES IN TIME have any sort of merit. On the exterior, it appears to work properly. Once you get into it, however, the game reveals itself to be, at best, a sorry joke.

Scenarios are selected from one of four time periods: prehistoric, Ancient Rome, World War II, and the near future. To fight the aliens, you must first complete a campaign comprising one battle from each of the four periods.

Each time period has four maps, each of which sets the parameters for a generic war using units that roughly match those available during that era. Armies are built to capture cities, which provide points for building more armies, and each army comprises up to twelve units. When two opposing armies meet, the map zooms in to a tactical display, and the individual units fight it out.



Price: $59.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386/33 or better, 4 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 14 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards and modem/null-modem play
of Players: 1-4
Protection: None (CD must be in drive to play)
Designer: Rod Olsen and Bruce Williams
Publisher: American Laser Games/QQP
Albuquerque, NM
87109
(800) 880-1718
Reader Service #: 347

▸ **QQP has been dissolved by its parent company, American Laser Games. See Briefings for more details.**

▸**APPEAL:** No one who appreciates good wargames will want to play this game.

▸**PROS:** It sounds like a good idea before you install it.

▸**CONS:** The game is boring and repetitive; and the bomb-chucking dinosaurs will make you sick with disbelief and irritation.

CG RATED

OWN THE SKY!

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— Joseph Novicki, PC Gamer Magazine

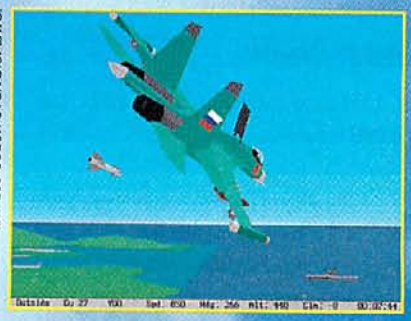
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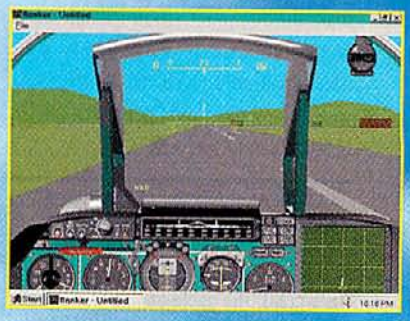
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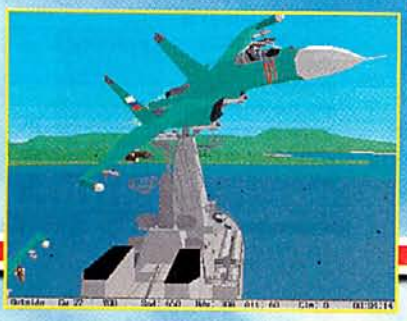
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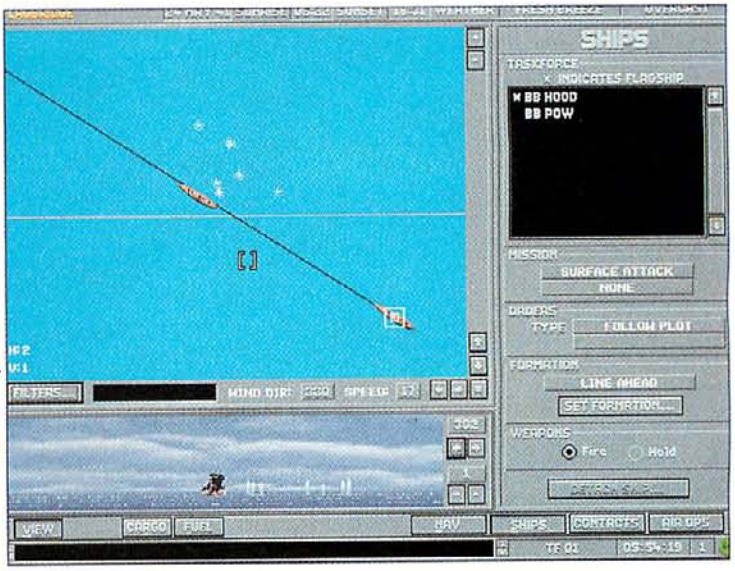
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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Hulks Of The Atlantic

A Change Of Scenery For World War II Naval Battles

By Bob Proctor



TOWING THE LINE GREAT NAVAL BATTLES 4 has some pretty graphics and a good interface, but is only a bland addition to the GNB lineup.

SSI has released yet another naval battle game, this one set in the European seas. In many respects, GREAT NAVAL BATTLES 4 is similar to its predecessors, with data for British, German, Italian, French and Soviet ships, in lieu of Pacific powers. What I like best about the GREAT NAVAL BATTLES series are the small, six-to-eight-ship battles. These show off the superb graphics to best advantage and are small enough to let you manage every ship effectively. There are very few scenarios like this in GNB4. Instead, you get a heavy dose of fleet actions, and controlling these numerous forces tends to get very laborious. For me, six to eight ships is about my limit; others may find their tolerance higher or lower but I doubt any one will have the patience for a Trafalgar II or a Jutland 1940 scenario.

STAYING IN FORMATION

The problem is partly in the AI and partly in the game design. The AI does a poor job in too many areas to be a good assistant in battle. The first problem is keeping ships in formation, specifically "Line Ahead" formation. Almost every task force begins in this formation with the flagship in the middle of the line. As soon as you order a course change from the flagbridge, the flagship turns and all of the ships in front of it begin a Keystone Kops routine to get back on station. In a battle, you lose control of range and target bearing for one-third to half the ships in the task force unless you adopt individual control! A second problem is target selection; most of your ships will automatically select the biggest target. This affects accuracy and makes all of your fire less effective. The only solution is to go to manual mode on each ship and constantly check and recheck its targetting. A third problem is with torpedoes; put simply, the AI won't fire them at anything other than point-blank range. Finally, the game design won't let you form task forces at sea, for, say, torpedo runs or to fire smokescreens.

ENEMY IN SIGHT, CAPTAIN

Of the 16 scenarios, only a few are interesting. The British confrontation of the German Bismarck and the battle against the pocket battleship Graf Spee near Uruguay, are small battles. The others are the Atlantic convoy battles, which include hypothetical sorties by the Tirpitz and Graf Zeppelin, as well as historical raids by the Scharnhorst and Lutzow.

All the other scenarios put a bewildering array of fleets in action, some historical and others hypothetical.

GREAT NAVAL BATTLES 4 is a competent game and there isn't anything better at the tactical level. It's too bad SSI didn't make the computer a more capable assistant. At times, GNB4 shines through with a few small, engaging battles, but otherwise it's a mediocre addition to the GREAT NAVAL BATTLES series.



Price: $45
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386/33 or better, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 14 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse; supports most major sound cards
of Players: 1
Protection: none (CD must be in drive to play)
Designer: Roy Gibson
Publisher: Strategic Simulations Inc.
Sunnyvale, CA
(408) 737-6800
Reader Service #: 348

APPEAL: Any fan of GNB3, or a gamer with a propensity for micromanagement, will enjoy this game.

PROS: The interface and graphics are great; the game engine works well for gunnery duels.

CONS: The AI is so poor it forces players to micromanage too much, and the majority of scenarios provided aren't very exciting.

CG RATED

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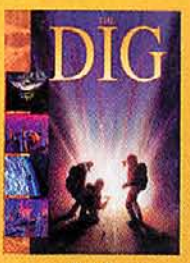
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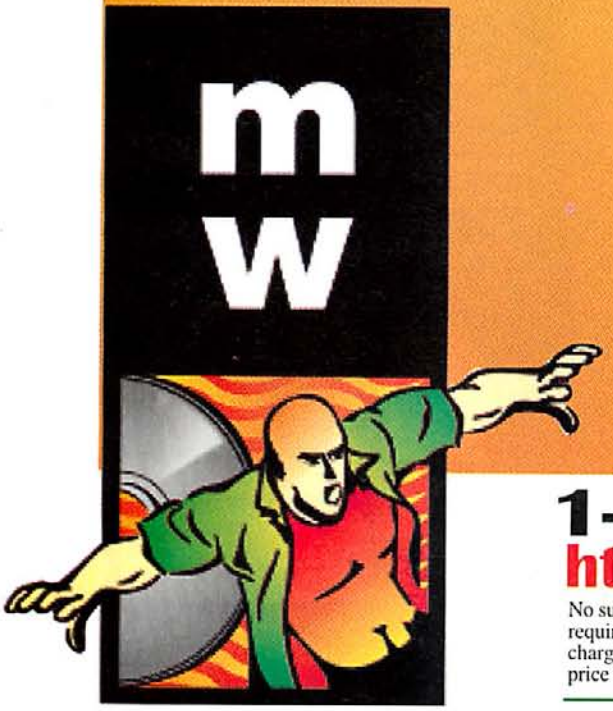


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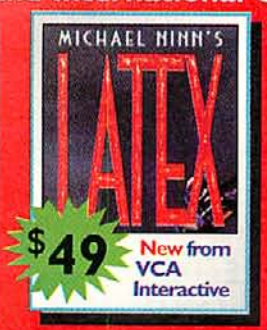
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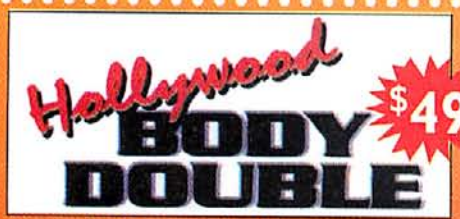


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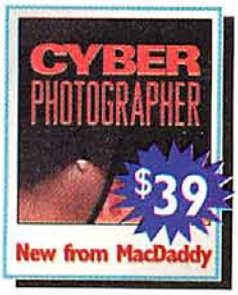
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DAY OF THE TENTACLE
LUCASARTS 1993



When the zany team of Dave Grossman and Tim Schafer created the script for DAY OF THE TENTACLE, they had one goal in mind—to create the interactive equivalent of a Chuck Jones cartoon. They succeeded so well in their mixture of crazy dialogue and off-beat sight gags that by the time they showed DAY OF THE TENTACLE to their idol (Jones is arguably the king of the classic Warner Brothers cartoon directors unless you talk to equally devoted Robert Clampett and Fritz Freleng aficionados), he was impressed enough to try to hire artists Peter Chan and Larry Ahern out from under the project. Fortunately, the artists stayed aboard; the animation team created smooth-flowing sequences like some game designers had always said could not be done; Richard Saunders (WKRP In Cincinnati's Les Nesman) led the voiceover actors in a series of clever performances; and the script from Grossman and Schafer kept gamers full of both challenge and laughter from start to finish. DAY OF THE TENTACLE was supposed to be a sequel to MANIAC MANSION. MANIAC MANSION was Lucasfilm Games' first game as publisher instead of developer, the game which developed the basic toolset for their successful series of graphic adventures (the SCUMM game engine is an acronym for Story Creation Utility for MANIAC MANSION), and the inspiration for a cable television series of the same name. Today, DAY OF THE TENTACLE is better known and better loved than the game that spawned LucasArts' successful string of graphic adventure games.

FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO
SIERRA/DYNAMIX 1993



From its inception, FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO (FPSFP) has offered the best computer football game graphics possible with 3-D perspectives, a rich color palette and flashy replay features. Project leader Patrick Cook had discovered the value of crisp, vibrant graphics in his earlier tenure with Cinemaware's TV SPORTS series of games, and he used that to give FPSFP the right look and feel to capture the loyalty of thousands of computer football fans. With the first FPSFP edition, he founded a dynasty where those same fans plunk down their hard-earned cash for virtual season tickets year after year, as updates of the great system come along. In addition to the appeal of great graphics, FPSFP brought authentic player/team statistics to the table, allowing gamers to play as general manager and handle personnel management decisions from drafts through trades, lineups and injuries. FPSFP also offered the ability to design custom plays/playbooks and provide for league play with custom coaching profiles for AI coaches. Some computer football games offer better stat models and some console football games offer better action, but when most gamers think of computer football, they automatically think of Front Page Sports Football Pro.

Inductees Prior To 1989

- **BATTLE CHESS** (Interplay Productions, 1988)
- **CHESSMASTER** (The Software Toolworks, 1986)
- **EARL WEAVER BASEBALL** (Electronic Arts, 1986)
- **EMPIRE** (Interstel, 1978)
- **F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER** (MicroProse, 1988)
- **GETTYSBURG: THE TURNING POINT** (SSI, 1986)
- **KAMPFGRUPPE** (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
- **MECH BRIGADE** (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
- **MIGHT & MAGIC** (New World Computing, 1986)
- **M.U.L.E.** (Electronic Arts, 1983)
- **PIRATES** (MicroProse, 1987)
- **SIMCITY** (Maxis, 1987)
- **STARFLIGHT** (Electronic Arts, 1986)
- **THE BARD'S TALE** (Electronic Arts, 1985)
- **ULTIMA III** (Origin Systems, 1983)
- **ULTIMA IV** (Origin Systems, 1985)
- **WAR IN RUSSIA** (Strategic Simulations, 1984)
- **WASTELAND** (Interplay Productions, 1986)
- **WIZARDRY** (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
- **ZORK** (Infocom, 1981)

Modern Inductees

- **FALCON 3.0** (Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)
- **GUNSHIP** (MicroProse, 1989)
- **HARPOON** (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
- **KING'S QUEST V** (Sierra On-Line, 1990)
- **LEMMINGS** (Psygnosis, 1991)
- **LINKS 386 PRO** (Access Software, 1992)
- **M-1 TANK PLATOON** (MicroProse, 1989)
- **RAILROAD TYCOON** (MicroProse, 1990)
- **RED BARON** (Dynamix, 1990)
- **SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION** (MicroProse, 1991)
- **THEIR FINEST HOUR** (LucasArts, 1989)
- **THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND** (LucasArts, 1990)
- **ULTIMA VI** (Origin Systems, 1990)
- **ULTIMA UNDERWORLD** (Origin Systems, 1992)
- **WING COMMANDER I & II** (Origin Systems, 1990-91)
- **WOLFENSTEIN 3-D** (id Software, 1992)

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of hardware configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches are frustratingly common.

Software fixes, or "patches," for buggy programs have become a necessary evil until we reach the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs. Red indicates new files.

Advanced Civilization V1.01 Update: Fixes many small problems and the Windows 95 city construction problem. 11/29/95

Apache Update: Addresses problems with the preferences screen and with Invincible mode. This patch *does not* address the modem problems. 10/24/95

Buried in Time Update: Includes new 16-bit Windows executables, fixes the exploding wall problem in Chateau Galliard and the Alien Hallway lockup; portions have also been enhanced for better performance. 10/11/95

CivNet Update: Fixes several reported problems. 12/8/95

Command & Conquer V1.18P Patch: Includes fixes for all known bugs to date and some game balance changes. 11/27/95

Crusader: No Remorse V1.21 Update: Includes several new features and fixes. 12/22/95

Dungeon Master 2 Sound Fix: Patches both the demo and the retail version. 7/29/95

First Encounters V1.06 Update (English CD Version): Fixes reported bugs. 12/6/95

Flight Commander 2 V1.04 Update: Fixes some reported errors. 10/11/95

Flight Unlimited V2.0: Contains two physics fixes, two video fixes, fixes a couple of controller bugs, a mouse driver problem, and adds total energy compensation to the Grob's variometer. 8/30/95

Hardball 5 v5.12 Update: Fixes errant force-outs, problems preventing customized stat selections. 12/5/95

Heroes of Might and Magic V1.2 Update: Fixes some problems with connecting via modem and some random crash problems. 10/24/95

Hive Update: Makes the game easier. 12/4/95

MechWarrior 2 DOS Version V1.1 Update: Fixes several things, including the right side taking more damage on mechs, increased joystick support and Windows 95 crash problems. 11/20/95

NHL 96 Update: Fixes a variety of technical problems, including playoff lock-ups or problems with saving playoff games to hard disk. 12/2/95

PBA Bowling for Windows V1.10: Incorporates several fixes and improvements. 12/27/95

Road From Sumter to Appomattox Update: Corrects retreat rule problems, allows confederate recruiting in Kentucky and Missouri. 12/8/95

Rebel Assault for Macintosh Update: Helps correct random lockups; also provides native support for Power Macs. 11/24/95

Riddle of Master Lu Update: Removes the 100 room limitation which causes the "Fatal Error" and others near the end of the game. This patch will work with your current saved games. 10/27/95

Steel Panthers V1.1 Update: Corrects several reported bugs. 10/23/95

Stonekeep V1.1 Update: Fixes reported bugs. 12/23/95

Su-27 New and Revised Missions: Contains revisions to several of the training missions, and additional six "Airmanship" missions. 12/21/95

Tigers on the Prowl V1.26: Fixes all known problems and improves some AI functions; may be used to upgrade any previous version of TOP. 10/19/95

Ultimate Football '95 CD Update: Corrects the "CD not found" problem. 10/19/95

Virtual Pool IRQ Update: Allows any version of Virtual Pool to use IRQ 10 and above. 11/1/95

Warlords II Deluxe V2.2.4: Fixes multiple problems. 11/10/95

CG-ROM ▸ New Patches are on disk.

ZDNet

These patches can usually be downloaded from the major online networks (CompuServe, GEnie, ZDNet) and Computer Gaming World's Web Site (http://www.zdnet.com/~gaming), but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's BBSes or direct from the publisher with proof of purchase.

Publisher BBS Numbers

Many of these patches are available directly from the publishers' bulletin board systems. Call with your modem parity settings at N-8-1.

Accolade (408) 296-8800
Apogee (508) 368-7036
Bethesda (301) 990-7552
Blizzard (714) 556-4602
Broderbund (415) 883-5889
Capstone (305) 374-6872
Creative Labs (405) 742-6660
Id Software (508) 368-4137
Impressions (617) 225-2042
InterPlay (714) 252-2822
LucasArts (415) 257-3070
Maxis (510) 254-3869
MicroProse (410) 785-1841
Microsoft (206) 936-6735
NovaLogic (818) 774-9528
Origin (512) 328-8402
Papyrus (617) 576-7472
Sierra Online (206) 644-0112
Spectrum HoloByte (510) 522-8909
SSI (408) 739-6137 or (408) 739 6623
Virgin Interactive (714) 833-3305

THE COMPUTER GAMING POLL • A MONTHLY SURVEY OF THE READERS OF COMPUTER GAMING



You've read our take on the latest games, now here's a chance to see what your fellow gamers think. The CG Top 100 is a monthly tally of game ratings provided by our readers via the CG Poll ballot found in each issue. Approximately 50 games are rated each month, and the results are added to the aggregate results from past months. This historical database serves as a terrific reference for what you, the gamers, feel are the best plays in gaming.



TOP ACTION GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	DOOM	id Software	10.24
2	Crusader: No Remorse	Origin	10.01
3	DOOM II	id Software	9.77
4	Dark Forces	LucasArts	9.70
5	Virtual Pool	Interplay	9.52
6	Magic Carpet	Electronic Arts	9.48
7	System Shock	Origin	9.19
8	The Need For Speed	Electronic Arts	9.12
9	Heretic	id Software	9.08
10	Mortal Kombat 3	GT Interactive	8.89



TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Full Throttle	LucasArts	9.44
2	Gabriel Knight	Sierra	9.42
3	Sam & Max Hit The Road	LucasArts	9.33
4	Woodruff & Schnibble	Sierra	9.28
5	Relentless	Electronic Arts	9.12
6	Ecstatica	Psygnosis	9.09
7	Under A Killing Moon	Access	9.04
8	Legend of Kyrandia 3	Virgin	8.94
9	Phantasmagoria	Sierra	8.91
10	Riddle of Master Lu	Sanctuary Woods	8.88



TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Incredible Toons	Dynamix	8.86
2	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	8.85
3	Zig Zag	QQP	8.29
4	Clockwerx	Spectrum Holobyte	8.25
5	Hodj n' Podj	Virgin	8.16
6	Power Poker	Electronic Arts	7.83
7	Shanghai-Greatest Moments	Activision	7.75
8	Lemmings Chronicles	Psygnosis	7.47
9	Multimedia Celebrity Poker	New World Computing	7.28
	Bridge Olympiad	QQP	7.28



TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander 3	Origin	10.57
2	TIE Fighter	LucasArts	10.26
3	MechWarrior 2	Activision	10.10
4	NASCAR Racing	Papyrus	10.01
5	U.S. Marine Fighters	Electronic Arts	9.86
6	U.S. Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	9.60
7	Wings of Glory	Origin	9.56
8	Flight Unlimited	Looking Glass	9.51
9	Indy Car Racing	Papyrus	9.43
10	Aces of the Deep	Dynamix	9.38



TOP SPORTS GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	NBA Live '95	Electronic Arts	9.86
2	NHL Hockey	EA	9.86
3	Front Page Sports Football 95	Sierra	9.64
4	PGA Tour Golf 486	Electronic Arts	8.93
5	Front Page Sports Baseball	Dynamix	8.76
6	Hardball 5	Accolade	8.72
7	Hardball IV	Accolade	8.70
8	Tony LaRussa 3	SSI	8.12
9	Rugby World Cup 1995	Electronic Arts	7.91
10	Ultimate Football '95	MicroProse	7.75



TOP STRATEGY GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Warcraft II	Blizzard	10.60
2	X-COM	MicroProse	10.37
3	Command & Conquer	Virgin	10.01
4	Heroes of Might & Magic	New World Computing	9.85
5	Jagged Alliance	Sir-Tech	9.81
6	Warlords II Deluxe	SSG	9.79
7	Master of Magic	MicroProse	9.66
8	Warcraft	Blizzard	9.64
9	X-COM: Terror from the Deep	MicroProse	9.38
10	Merchant Prince	QQP	9.08



TOP ROLE PLAYING GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Anvil of Dawn	New World Computing	9.15
2	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	9.07
3	Ravenloft: Stone Prophet	SSI	8.98
4	Arena: The Elder Scrolls	Bethesda	8.83
5	Wolf	Sanctuary Woods	8.64
6	Stonekeep	Interplay	8.45
7	Menzoberranzan	SSI	8.26
8	Ravenloft	SSI	8.16
9	Mordor	TDA	8.00
10	Dark Sun: Wake of the Ravager	SSI	7.64



TOP WARGAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Panzer General	SSI	10.46
2	Steel Panthers	SSI	10.46
3	Rise of the West	RAW	9.63
4	Flight Commander 2 Msn Bldr	Avalon Hill	9.48
5	Stalingrad	Avalon Hill	9.38
6	Operation Crusader	Avalon Hill	9.36
7	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	9.35
8	Custer's Last Command	Incredible Simulatio	9.12
9	Tanks	SSI	9.00
10	Tigers on the Prowl	HPS Simulations	8.97

Reader Poll #138

		GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
★	1	Warcraft II	Blizzard	ST	10.60
★	2	Wing Commander 3	Origin	SI	10.57
★	3	Steel Panthers	SSI	WG	10.46
★		Panzer General	SSI	WG	10.46
	5	X-COM	MicroProse	ST	10.37
	6	TIE Fighter	LucasArts	SI	10.26
★	7	DOOM	id Software	AC	10.24
	8	MechWarrior 2	Activision	SI	10.10
	9	Crusader: No Remorse	Origin	AC	10.01
		Command & Conquer	Virgin	ST	10.01
		NASCAR Racing	Papyrus	SI	10.01
★	12	NHL96	EA	SP	9.86
		U.S. Marine Fighters	Electronic Arts	SI	9.86
★		NBA Live '95	Electronic Arts	SP	9.86
	15	Heroes of Might & Magic	New World Computing	ST	9.85
	16	Jagged Alliance	Sir-Tech	ST	9.81
	17	Warlords II Deluxe	SSG	ST	9.79
	18	DOOM II	id Software	AC	9.77
	19	Dark Forces	LucasArts	AC	9.70
	20	Master of Magic	MicroProse	ST	9.66
	21	Front Page Sports Football 95	Sierra	SP	9.64
		Warcraft	Blizzard	ST	9.64
	23	Rise of the West	RAW	WG	9.63
	24	U.S. Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	SI	9.60
	25	Wings of Glory	Origin	SI	9.56
	26	Virtual Pool	Interplay	AC	9.52
	27	Flight Unlimited	Looking Glass	SI	9.51
	28	Flight Commander 2 Msn Bldr	Avalon Hill	WG	9.48
		Magic Carpet	Electronic Arts	AC	9.48
★	30	Full Throttle	LucasArts	AD	9.44
	31	Indy Car Racing	Papyrus	SI	9.43
	32	Gabriel Knight	Sierra	AD	9.42
	33	Stalingrad	Avalon Hill	WG	9.38
		X-COM: Terror from the Deep	MicroProse	ST	9.38
		Aces of the Deep	Dynamix	SI	9.38
	36	Operation Crusader	Avalon Hill	WG	9.36
	37	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	WG	9.35
	38	Sam & Max Hit The Road	LucasArts	AD	9.33
	39	Woodruff & Schnibble	Sierra	AD	9.28
	40	Fleet Defender	MicroProse	SI	9.25
	41	System Shock	Origin	AC	9.19
★	42	Anvil of Dawn	New World Computing	RP	9.15
	43	Custer's Last Command	Incredible Simulatio	WG	9.12
		The Need For Speed	Electronic Arts	AC	9.12
		Relentless	Electronic Arts	AD	9.12
	46	Ecstatica	Psygnosis	AD	9.09
	47	Merchant Prince	QQP	ST	9.08
		Heretic	id Software	AC	9.08
	49	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.07
	50	Under A Killing Moon	Access	AD	9.04
	51	Caesar II	Sierra	ST	9.00
		Tanks	SSI	WG	9.00
		VGA Planets	Tim Wisseman	ST	9.00
	54	Ravenloft: Stone Prophet	SSI	RP	8.98
	55	Tigers on the Prowl	HPS Simulations	WG	8.97
	56	The Grandest Fleet	QQP	ST	8.96
		Perfect General II	QQP	WG	8.96
	58	Legend of Kyrandia 3	Virgin	AD	8.94
		Transport Tycoon	MicroProse	ST	8.94
	60	PGA Tour Golf 486	Electronic Arts	SP	8.93
	61	Phantasmagoria	Sierra	AD	8.91
	62	Mortal Kombat 3	GT Interactive	AC	8.89
	63	Riddle of Master Lu	Sanctuary Woods	AD	8.88
	64	Descent	Interplay	AC	8.86
★		Incredible Toons	Dynamix	CP	8.86
	66	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	CP	8.85
	67	Hexen	Raven Software	AC	8.84
		Hornet	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	8.84
	69	Arena: The Elder Scrolls	Bethesda	RP	8.83
	70	Carriers at War II	SSG	WG	8.82
	71	Serf City	SSI	ST	8.80
	72	Harpoon II	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	8.78
	73	Front Page Sports Baseball	Dynamix	SP	8.76
	74	Star Trek: TNG, Final Unity	Spectrum HoloByte	AD	8.75
	75	Genghis Khan II	Koei	WG	8.74
	76	Hardball 5	Accolade	SP	8.72
		1830	Avalon Hill	ST	8.72
	78	Hardball IV	Accolade	SP	8.70
	79	Buried In Time	Sanctuary Woods	AD	8.65
	80	Wolf	Sanctuary Woods	RP	8.64
		King's Quest VII	Sierra	AD	8.64
	82	Superheros of Hoboken	Legend	AD	8.62
	83	1942 Pacific Air War Gold	MicroProse	SI	8.61
	84	Magic Carpet 2	EA	AC	8.51
	85	Apache	Interactive Magic	SI	8.50
		Werewolf vs. Comanche	NovaLogic	SI	8.50
		The Horde	Crystal Dynamics	AC,ST	8.50
		Death Gate	Legend	AD	8.50
	89	Star Trek: Judgment Rites	Interplay	AD	8.49
	90	FX Fighter	GTE Entertainment	AC	8.46
	91	1942 Pacific Air War	MicroProse	SI	8.45
		Stonekeep	Interplay	RP	8.45
	93	Dark Legions	SSI	AC	8.43
	94	Lords of the Realm	Impressions	ST	8.42
	95	Sim City CD-ROM	Interplay	ST	8.40
	96	Cyclemania	Accolade	AC	8.37
	97	Rebel Assault	LucasArts	AC	8.35
		Hand Of Fate	Westwood Studios	AD	8.35
	99	Loderunner	Dynamix	ST	8.31
	100	Romance of Three Kingdoms III	Koei	ST	8.29

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above. ★ = Top game of type. Red = New Game, AD = Adventure, RP = Role Playing, SI = Simulation/ Space Combat, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports, CP = Classic/Puzzle. Games are retired after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame.

What's the Deal With... Reviewing?



By Martin E. Cirulis

It's the day after New Year's as I write this. While the hangover finally fades, and the last of the holiday visits become merely chaotic memories, I have time to ponder a conversation that came up a least a half-dozen times over the past couple of weeks.

You all know how the holidays are. You end up at endless little gatherings talking to people you haven't seen since last Christmas (at least). The usual topics come up: "How are the kids?" "Cold enough for you?" and, inevitably, "How's work?" Well, when you write for a living, the work question gets a little complicated, but eventually I mention that one of my gigs is reviewing computer games. Now, if I'm talking to someone familiar with our odd little hobby, their expression is one of unconcealed lust and envy, and usually followed by, "Free games...cool! I wish I could get a job like that."

In the spirit of the holidays, I usually smile back and say something humble and encouraging, instead of cackling madly while I count off the number of copies of MECHWARRIOR 2 I've received. But after a few of these exchanges and some of the more glib on-line comments I've been reading of late, I've begun to wonder if maybe somebody shouldn't clear up what this whole deal is about and point out that it isn't a bed of virtual roses.

Now, don't get me wrong, reviewing isn't exactly like getting up at 6 a.m. to dig ditches or lug forty-pound boxes of paper around a warehouse. It's pretty sweet for the most part—but it has tedium and agonies all its own.

I won't even bother getting into the actual writing; I'll just leave hopefuls out there with the thought that spending countless hours playing games gives you the background knowledge to do the job. But it helps to have spent countless hours reading, everything from cereal boxes to Asimov to Shakespeare, if you want to be able to write about what you know in a way that will keep somebody awake.

And of course, there is the sheer work of playing a game from beginning to end in just two or three weeks. Yes, I said "work." Oh, I can hear you snorting out there, but think about it for a moment. The time I spend on a COMMAND & CONQUER is a treat, but imagine, for a moment, having to put the same time into the likes of TEKWAR or the first version of OUTPOST.

But the highest price to pay for doing this job professionally is that it takes some of the fun out of the whole thing. You eventually lose your ability to play something just for the heck of it without a part of your brain noting the pros and cons. Like a musician who can't turn off their critical ear for a night of clubbing, you can't have a simple opinion about a game. "This sucks" is okay when you're a lucky consumer, but when you have to have a half-dozen reasons for every feeling about a game, just in case some rabid PR Rep cries "foul," it takes the simple pleasure out of things.

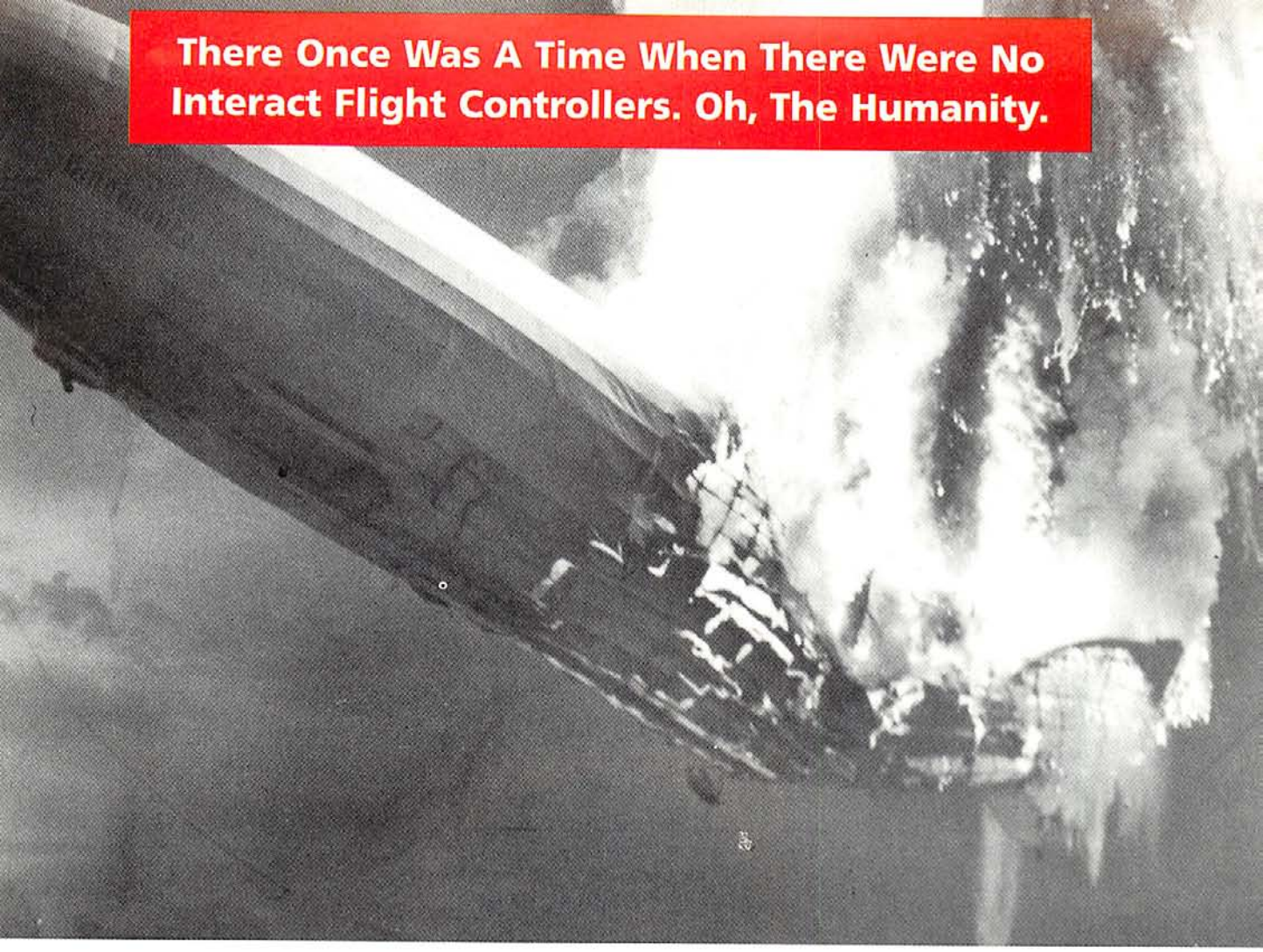
> **"Free games...cool! I wish I could get a job like that."**

Of course, this kind of noble sacrifice of gaming pleasure and hard-earned writing skill feels completely wasted the first time you come across some Net-wit going on and on about how a magazine you've written for is pointless to read, because "we all know that the reviews are slanted toward big companies/advertisers." Apart from how incredibly insulting that sort of twaddle is, it is ironic beyond belief. Not only have I never had the gist of a review tinkered with by any Editor I have worked for (in *CGW* or others), but the only time I have been tempted to "go easy" on a game is when it is from a small company. I honestly feel bad when I know I am about to do harm to a small software house—a house that probably tried its best, with limited resources—by telling the public that only a demented Yak would enjoy their game. If that's the truth, then I have no choice but to give you folks the bottom line. Sometimes that doesn't make it feel any better.

I'm sure most of you are not in tears over the plight of the computer game reviewer, but as you go through the scads of critical, accurate and sometimes even entertaining reviews you find month after month between these pages, spare the odd thought for the writers. Sure it's cool, but it's not all just free games.

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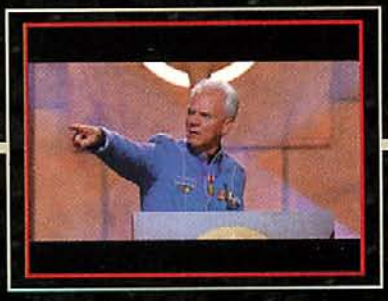




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